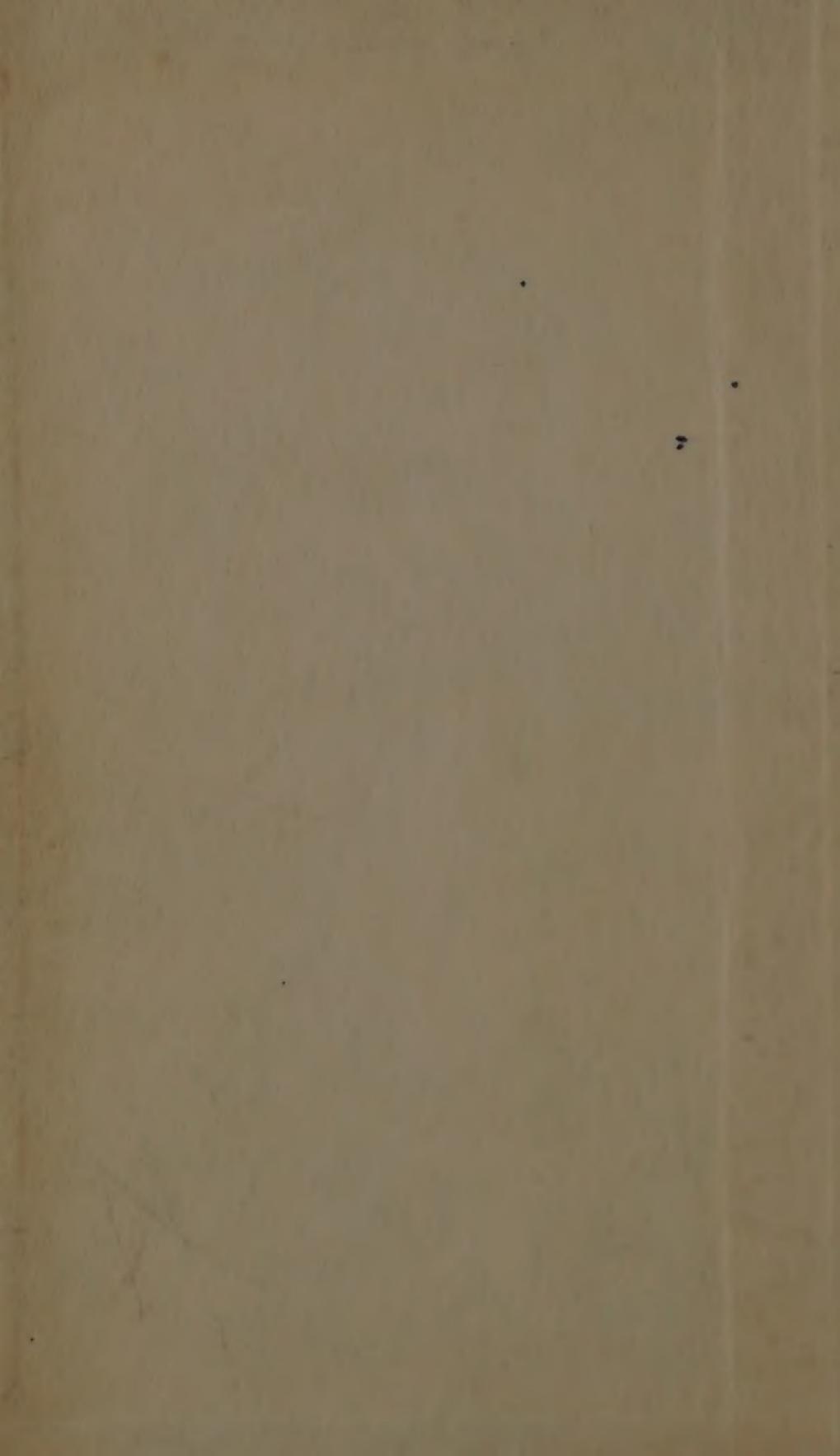


UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA



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CONTEMPORARY SPANISH DRAMATISTS

Plays by
Pérez Galdós, Linares Rivas, Marquina, Zamacois,
Dicenta and the Alvarez Quinteros

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH
WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY

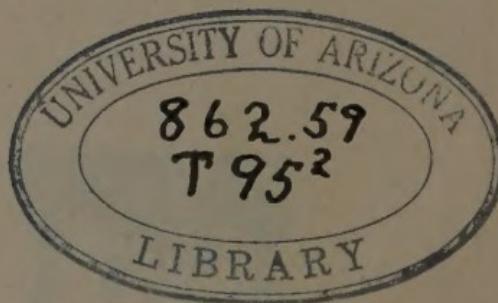
CHARLES ALFRED TURRELL



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To the memory of
MY WIFE
NORINE GAYDEN TURRELL

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PREFACE

The interest awakened in America during the past few years in the drama has led to the publication of many translations from the various European languages. Many excellent collections, as well as numerous individual plays, have appeared in English translation. The American public has been learning to read plays, an art hitherto neglected in this country, and the works of Hauptmann and Sudermann, Brieux and Rostand, Maeterlinck and D'Annunzio, and many of lesser note, have become well known even to those unfamiliar with the languages of the originals. One country alone has been practically ignored in the compilation of these collections from contemporary dramatists. With a few exceptions, the drama of Spain of today is unavailable to those who do not read Spanish. Of her recent dramatists only Echegaray has been translated to any extent, and he can scarcely be considered contemporary. No collection of modern Spanish plays exists. A volume, "Plays by Benavente," recently translated by Mr. J. G. Underhill, and a few isolated plays are all that have been published in book form. Several others have appeared in dramatic and literary magazines. Of the plays contained in this volume, only "*Electra*" has been previously translated. This is included here as probably the best and most typical of Galdós' dramatic works. There are in print no translations of any of the works of Marquina, Linares Rivas, Dicenta or Zamacois. The peculiarly Spanish atmosphere of the theatrical productions of that country may have influenced translators to believe that they would not appeal to the American reader. It is this very atmosphere peculiar to the Peninsula that has inspired the present volume, with the hope of aiding in a better understanding of the life and spirit of Spain.

The compiler's thanks are especially due to his colleague, Professor Mark Skidmore for his excellent translation of "*Juan José*," as well as for kind assistance with several of the other plays; also to Miss Helen S. Nicholson of the Tucson High School for many valuable suggestions and a careful revision of the manuscript.

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The introductory sketch makes no claim to originality, but information has been drawn from all sources available. Often it seemed best to make use of accepted opinions rather than venture a judgment that might be based on more imperfect knowledge. Acknowledgment is made especially to Professor O. G. Bunnell's edition of "Electra," for several years a favorite with teachers of Spanish, and to Professor S. G. Morley's recent school text of "Doña Clarines" and "Mañana de Sol" for his biography of the Quinteros brothers.

Lastly the translator acknowledges with deep sorrow the inspiration and suggestions of his wife, Norine Gayden Turrell, in the beginning of a work which she was not to see completed.

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INTRODUCTION

The last three decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the death of Romanticism in almost every language. The world had become too practical and scientific to delight in the love-making of mediæval knights and the bombastic boasts of the cavalier. Victor Hugo, living nearly to the close of the century, saw the death of all his friends of 1830, and their style was well-nigh forgotten. And though, almost at the end of the century, France produced a great romantic drama, "Cyrano de Bergerac" is in no sense typical of the contemporary French stage. In these last three decades the models of Augier and the younger Dumas had been set up in every land, and Emile Zola was writing his great series of "human documents" in novel form, at the same time pleading for real life on the stage. A recent writer on the Spanish drama says that there existed a "manifest incompatibility between the very spirit of the French realists and the Spanish national dramatic ideals"¹ and that Romanticism, therefore, died harder in Spain than elsewhere. While this is no doubt true, it was due not so much to the dramatic ideals of Spain as to its everyday life. In Spain life itself is romantic, or rather, seems so to us who are not Spaniards. Of course, it is not really so—the humdrum is there as everywhere, but the manners and customs of Spain have changed less since the days of Lope de Vega and Calderón than has English life since the days of Shakespeare. Hence, if Spanish life is put on the stage, it will seem more like the Middle Ages, therefore more romantic, than does the everyday life of other countries. The bull fight still exists as a feature of Spanish civilization—or the lack of it; Spanish dancers still wear their national costumes; the Spanish woman is still subject to a semi-oriental seclusion. The church is still dominant in national politics and the monastery and the convent are still important factors in the life of the people. These things may seem very mediæval

¹"Spanish Drama of Today." Miss Elizabeth Wallace in *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 102, p. 357. September, 1908.

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and romantic to us, but to the Spaniard they are exceedingly commonplace.

French influence has been strong in Spain for a hundred years, and in the midst of those who tried to imitate the French there rose to popularity in the later seventies and eighties, the man who is perhaps best known outside of Spain of all her modern dramatists: José Echegaray. And Echegaray is of the Middle Ages, though combining the mediæval spirit with the modern problem play. This latter phase, confessedly an imitation of Ibsen, is the new note he introduces to the Spanish stage. "The Son of Don Juan" is modeled directly after "Ghosts," but Echegaray has failed to catch the struggles of character, so essential in Ibsen. In his masterpiece, "The Great Galeoto," he has portrayed very convincingly the evil effects of slander—the disturbing element in a picture of domestic happiness, and in working out his plot he has shown himself a master of stage technique. He has, however, reached his end by means quite worthy of that play-mechanic, Eugene Scribe—a duel that savors of mediævalism, long monologues, clandestine visits, surprises at just the right moment, and heroic speeches, more bombastic than real. His methods resemble Sardou rather than Augier or Dumas fils. The thesis is a real and practical one, the problem one found in every community, but the action is romantic and almost melodramatic. It is unnecessary to discuss Echegaray's other works. In them, as in "The Great Galeoto," is plainly seen his affinity with Lope and Calderón, the great masters of the "Siglo de Oro," who were essentially romantic and akin to Shakespeare. In fact, even more than these, more than the realists, he resembles Victor Hugo and all his plays are filled with the same romantic phantoms rather than real people, the same fictitious society and the same high-sounding declamations, the same artificiality in the action and in the moral, so characteristic of the great French Romanticist. Says a Spanish critic of Echegaray:² "We do not owe to him a single emotion, he has not revealed to us a single interesting aspect of the spirit of life, he has dispelled no one of our doubts concerning the destiny of humanity, nor has he brought one moment of calm to our troubled hearts.

²"Teatro Español contemporáneo," by Manuel Bueno. Madrid, 1909.
p. 14.

. . . He is not, as has been supposed, a direct observer of life, nor a philosopher, nor a sociologist who aspires to guide us, as does Ibsen, towards a promised land. He is a poet of unbridled phantasy, heir to the inspiration and the productivity of Calderón . . . He who seeks in his works the real solution of a problem will be disappointed." It may be seen, then, that Echegaray belongs to a former generation and does not represent the thought of the New Spain of today. For this reason none of his plays have been included in the present volume. A number have already been translated into English.

DICENTA



Of the school of Echegaray, and like him a romanticist, or perhaps a pseudo-realist, was Joaquín Dicenta; but while Echegaray's romanticism dealt with the middle classes of society and with the rich, Dicenta turned to the poor and degraded, and was the first to give the proletariat a place on the Spanish stage. Dicenta was born in Catalayud in 1860 and died in 1916. His first plays, "The Suicide of Werther" (*El Suicidio de Werther*), "The Higher Law" (*La mejor Ley*), and "Honor and Life" (*Honor y Vida*) attracted little attention, but "Luciano," played in 1894, won some really enthusiastic praise from the critics. In 1895 there appeared what proved to be his masterpiece, "Juan José." Here is a drama of passion, passion as strong as that which beats beneath the velvet doublet or the frock coat of a hero of Zorrilla or of Echegaray. The medium is changed, but not the type. It is no real drama of class struggle like that great tragedy of the proletariat, Hauptmann's "Weavers," for, though the working men do cry out from the depths of their misery and deprivations against their employers, the dramatic conflict is not based on any attempt to right their wrongs or mitigate their sufferings. The conflict is purely one of love and passion—the love of a good man, though a laborer, for a bad woman. Juan José is neither a socialist nor an anarchist. He kills Paco, not because he is his employer and economic conditions make it possible for him to deprive Juan José of his work and his living, but because he has taken from him the woman he loves. The conflict would be the

same if all the characters belonged to a much higher stratum of society, though it would be less brutal and Juan José, being less ignorant, would probably be less blind. The setting, the costumes and the language are all faithful to life, but the personages are those of traditional Romanticism. A Spanish critic has said: "The cult of woman and the admiration of personal valor are the axes of Spanish Romanticism," and it is around these elements that the plot of "Juan José" centers. It is a transition play that must not be omitted in a study of contemporary Spanish drama.

Dicenta's next play, "The Feudal Lord" (*El Señor feudal*, 1896) is similar in theme, but much inferior. The only son of the feudal lord is drowned in a vat of wine by the hero, the avenger of his sister's honor. It has been characterized as a problem play and a symbolic play, but neither the problem nor the symbolism is apparent. A few notes of passion, cold and conventional—that is all. "Aurora" (1902) approaches the symbolical. In the hero, a young doctor, and the heroine we see science and self-abnegation, and from the union of these factors will be born a new Humanity that shall purify and regenerate the world. Among other plays are, "Yesterday's Crime" (*El crimen de ayer*, 1904), a tale of seduction and revenge, and, "Outliving One's Usefulness" (*Sobrevivirse*, 1913) the history of a popular dramatist, stricken with paralysis, poisoning himself, after years, as an act of gratitude to a devoted wife and a faithful friend who have sacrificed their love to care for him. Dicenta wrote several very popular *zarzuelas*, the best being "*Curra Vargas*," also a number of novels and short stories.

PÉREZ GALDÓS

The "Grand Old Man" of the Spanish stage today, the greatest literary genius of modern Spain is Benito Pérez Galdós. While Galdós' fame rests upon his more than fifty novels and his talent is at its best in prose fiction, he has given a sufficient number of works to the theater to show his dramatic ability as well. In 1892 his novel "Reality" (*Realidad*), which he had written in the form of a dialogue, was played in Madrid with considerable success. The next year saw the production of his first real drama, "The Mad One in the House" (*La loca de la casa*), and there followed

during the next three years, "The Duchess of San Quintín" (*La de San Quintín*), "The Condemned" (*Los condenados*), "The Will" (*Voluntad*) and "The Wild Beast" (*La fiera*). In 1896 Galdós' great novel "Doña Perfecta" was dramatized and played successfully in various parts of Spain.

The first performance of "Electra," the 30th of January, 1901, was perhaps the greatest triumph of Galdós' life. Upon this work he concentrated all his affection and care. The play was received with enthusiasm in Madrid and the greatest homage paid to its author. The conservative party began a vigorous propaganda against the work, and in the provinces especially made great efforts to prevent its production. In one city the actors were obliged to leave the theater before the performance in order to escape violence at the hands of the clericals. In another, the members of the company were refused lodging and were obliged to spend the night in the streets. Even from the pulpit and the confessional, says Galdós himself, war was waged against the work. That the play is an expression of the liberal and scientific ideas of its author is obvious, but it was by no means directed against the Church, though it intentionally lashes some of the abuses so prevalent in Spain and countenanced by the clerical party. As in "*Doña Perfecta*," Galdós combats narrowness and bigotry, and uses as his weapon modern scientific thought. By accepting, as the rest of the world has done, the achievements of science will Spain progress, and thus only can she "come to life," to use the closing words of the play. The drama may be called symbolic. Pantoja may represent the clerical party; Cuesta, modern business and the Marquis, the old aristocracy, joining hands with Science (Maximó) to save Spain (*Electra*) and bring her to a new life. Said the *Heraldo de Madrid*, reviewing the first performance: "Last night will mark a great date in history for the Spanish theater and for liberty. It is a movement of social and political renovation. Spain demands light and liberty; she demands the right to live under modern European conditions; she is coming to life."³

In 1902 came "Soul and Life" (*Alma y vida*), a semi-symbolical play, almost a melodrama, the scene of which is laid in the eighteenth century. "Big Mary" (*Mariucha*),

³Translation of Otis G. Bunnell in his edition of "Electra." New York, 1902. Introduction, p. 4.

another plea for freedom, this time freedom from social conventions, was played in 1903, and the succeeding year Galdós' dialogued novel "The Grandfather" (*El Abuelo*), written in 1897, was dramatized.⁴ This has proved to be his greatest success, next to "Electra." It is another picture of struggle against old traditions and prejudices, a play that Spanish critics have compared to "King Lear." Family pride is the theme, and this pride, characteristic of the Castilian, yields in the end to the power of pure and unselfish love.

"Barbara" (1905) is a story of Syracuse in 1815, and "Alceste" (1914) is a modern version of the ancient theme; neither added to Galdós' dramatic fame. His next play, "Celia Goes Slumming" (*Celia en los infiernos*, 1915), is a powerful socialistic drama, reflecting the recent political activities and tendencies of its author, and is the expression of his desire for the betterment of the laboring classes in Spain. The great war has perhaps suggested the note of peace and international brotherhood that is sounded in "Sor Simona" (1915). The socialistic author speaks in the words of Sister Simona: "Let Love be your law, Love in every place and on every occasion . . . , and he who speaks Love, speaks Peace." . . . "One's only real country is Humanity.—Seek it in the enormous mass of the lowly, the destitute, in those who have no food, no clothing, no home." Galdós' latest play, "Solomon the Rogue" (*El Tacaño Salomón*, 1916) is a lesson of frugality and generosity, laid in a simple working man's home in Madrid.

As has been said, Galdós is primarily a novelist. He has brought to the theater the standards and methods of the novel. With too great a neglect, perhaps, of stage effects, he has followed no dramatic models and he has used processes of thought and sentiment rarely found outside of prose fiction. Hence his plays have in them something of both the theater and the novel and whatever lack there may be of dramatic art in "Electra" is due to this neglect of stage-craft, resulting from years of novel writing.

BENAVENTE

Coming now to the younger generation, the master is

⁴English translation: "The Grandfather" by Elizabeth Wallace in *Poet Lore*, Vol. XXI, No. 3. May-June, 1910.

Jacinto Benavente, generally considered the greatest living dramatist in Spain, and worthy to rank with the best in any language. Of all the realistic dramatists of our times none is more realistic than Benavente. "No one has succeeded better in picturing that society which is puffed up with its own importance, idle and ignorant, steeped in pleasure, the society of 'good taste,' but notoriously vicious," to use the words of Fitzmaurice-Kelly.⁵ He is a reformer and a teacher, but nowhere is the didactic motive apparent in his works. In but one of his plays, "Autumn Roses" (*Rosas de otoño*) (1906), a play of domestic life, does he seem to try to prove a thesis. In other words, he has come nearer than anyone else to the theatrical ideal expressed by Emile Zola, that the stage should portray life without moralizing, but teaching merely by the picture shown. This ideal neither Zola nor his successors in France were able to attain. Benavente does not preach, as do Brieux and Hervieu, but simply puts on the stage people as he finds them.

Benavente was born in Madrid in 1866. His father was a physician of considerable reputation and of such esteem that a statue has been erected to his memory in the Buen Retiro. Jacinto studied law, but after completing his course, turned his attention to literature and the stage. In preparation for his dramatic work he became an actor, and even today often takes some of the roles in his own plays. His first play was "In Another's Nest" (*El nido ajeno*), performed in the Teatro de la Comedia in Madrid in 1894. It is a play involving the "eternal triangle," but lacking the usual domestic tragedy. In 1896 "People you know" (*Gente conocida*) was performed. This was a satire on the upper classes in Spain, and was enthusiastically received by all save those he was pleased to satirize. Even these of the upper classes were obliged later to acknowledge his dramatic merit. A similar social satire is "The Repast of the Beasts" (*La comida de las fieras*, 1898), considered by Martínez Sierra as his masterpiece. In "The commonplace" (*Lo Cursi*, 1901), he shows the exaggerated modernism which is the ideal of many, and in doing so satirizes the present-day zest for unconventionality in society. An even keener picture of sham and hypocrisy is "Evildoers of Good"

⁵Translated from "Historia de la Literatura Espanola" by J. Fitzmaurice-Kelly. Madrid, 1916. p. 332.

(*Los malhechores del bien*, 1905). Many of his plays are simply bits of life taken here and there in Spain and in the Madrid he knows so well. People of every rank and of every class are brought before us. There are ordinary café scenes, such as one may witness in any Madrid café at any time, and the plots are as commonplace as they are real. Among such plays are "Fashions" (*Modas*, 1901), "The Commuter's Train" (*El tren de los maridos*, 1902), "Non-smokers" (*No fumadores*, 1904), and "The Tombstone of Dreams" (*La losa de los sueños*, 1912), the last showing mother-love as the most potent factor in a woman's life. Some are fanciful sketches with a literary or historical setting, but still realistic, as "The Smile of Mona Lisa" (*La sonrisa de la Gioconda*),⁶ "The Story of Othello" (*La historia de Otelo*) and, "The Last Minuet" (*El ultimo minué*), a story of the Reign of Terror.

It is in the modern Harlequin play, "Created Interests" (*Los intereses creados*, 1907) that we see Benavente as the most profound critic. While pretending to amuse us with his "puppets of pasteboard and rags," he makes these same puppets seem so human that their masks become transparent and we recognize ourselves. A Spanish critic has characterized the play as the "most precious jewel of the Spanish literature of our day," and it is generally considered the author's masterpiece.

Inspired by the war, and especially the position of Spain as a neutral, Benavente wrote in 1916 a second part or sequel to this play, entitled, "The City of Gaiety and Confidence" (*La ciudad alegre y confiada*), taking as his text the words of the prophet Zephaniah (II, 15), "This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation."

In "The Dragon of Fire" (*El Dragón de fuego*, 1903) and "The Witches' Sabbath" (*La noche del sábado*, 1903) he has gone into the realm of the symbolic play without at all leaving the real world. In the latter his characters are no dream-persons, but men and women such as one finds at Monte Carlo or any similar resort. And if a symbolic meaning is read in the play it is such a meaning as might be obtained from seeing the scenes in real life and placed in the

⁶ English translation: "The Smile of Mona Lisa" by John A. Herman, Boston, 1915.

same environment. Fantastic it is, indeed, but in no sense romantic. The eternal struggle for the ideal is its theme: "Our witches' souls fly, some towards their dreams, others towards their vices, others towards their loves: towards that which is far from our life and which is our real life."

A number of Benavente's best plays are now available to American readers, as a volume of translations has recently been published.⁷

LINARES RIVAS ✓

Manuel Linares Rivas was born in 1866. He has made one attempt at the poetic drama, "Lady Godiva" (1912), which is interesting on account of its treatment of an English theme, but which is not at all typical of his work, nor is it particularly good poetry. He has deviated much from the well-known story. In Linares Rivas' play it is the conqueror of Coventry, the Duke of Foringdor, who imposes the sacrifice on Lady Godiva to save the life of her husband, the leader of the town's defense. Touched by her self-abnegation, the Duke frees the prisoners and gives back to the town its liberty.

Linares Rivas is at his best in "The Family Lineage" (*El Abolengo*, 1904), a society and domestic play—not a tragedy—based on the conflict between family and common-sense, and satirizing the still prevalent regard for rank and titles. "Air from Without" (*Aire de fuera*, 1903) is a comedy of manners, influenced by the French, especially Paul Her-vieu. Convinced of the infidelity of his wife, Baltasar goes to Belgium where he will become a citizen and, after the legal period of separation, will sue for a divorce—the usual procedure in real life, as our divorce courts prove, but far removed from the dramatic procedure of the romantic Echegaray. The Spanish "cult of woman," mentioned above, is no part of Linares Rivas' method, nor does Baltasar display his "personal valor" by killing his wife's lover in a duel. Of "María Victoria" (1904), may be said only that it is marked by the author's usual splendid technique, but neither the plot nor the characters arouse any particular interest. The same is true of "The Race of Jupiter" (*La Estirpe de*

⁷"Plays by Jacinto Benavente," translated by John Garrett Underhill, with an introduction. New York, 1917.

Jupiter," 1904), a satire of aristocratic society. Among Linares Rivas' other plays are "The Race" (*La Raza*, 1912) and "Madam Haughty" (*Doña Desdenes*, 1912), the latter a play of the military, taken from a Hungarian story. In "The Power of Evil" (*La fuerza del mal*, 1914) the dramatist comes nearest to the didactic. The thesis is the necessity of evil, the power of which may be used legitimately as a last resort to reach one's end. Fortunately he fails to prove very conclusively this Nietzschean theory, and the drama suffers in consequence.

Linares Rivas is a member of the Spanish Senate from the conservative party, and "The Claws" (*La Garra*, 1914), awakened considerable surprise. The little city of Campanela is so obviously the famous Santiago de Compostella, and the play is truly a piece of daring when one realizes how deeply the "claws" of the Church are imbedded in the life of such a city. The dramatist is not didactic, but merely shows what may happen, and we must believe often does happen, as the result of antiquated laws and mediæval thought in the midst of a modern world. It was, naturally, highly praised by the republican and radical papers of Madrid, but even more conservative ones did not hesitate to commend it as a great work and to admire the boldness of its author in putting it on the stage.

"The Foam of Champagne" (*La Espuma de Champagne*, 1915) tells the old story of a girl's poverty and temptation—a temptation from which she is saved by the magnanimity of one of the tempters. Her condition is not materially changed, however, and the fear is left that the rescue may not be a permanent one. The play is especially realistic in its scenes of the underworld, and this realism is its chief merit, for a real plot is lacking. Linares Rivas' latest play is "Like Ants . . ." (*Como hormigas . . .*, 1917).

ALVAREZ QUINTEROS

The brothers Seraffn and Joaquín Alvarez Quintero are the most popular playwrights of Spain today. They were born at Utrera, near Seville, in 1871 and 1873, and spent their boyhood in the latter city. When but sixteen and fifteen years of age respectively, one of their farces was played in a Seville theater. They went to Madrid, but it was 1897 be-

fore they were able to make a hit in the capital. Since then their work has been untiring and in all they have had performed nearly a hundred comedies, farces and *zarzuelas* of various lengths and differing greatly in kind and value, but all written in collaboration. While by no means possessed of the literary genius of the dramatic writers just discussed, they have more theatrical talent than any save Benavente, and much of their work rises to the plane of real literature. All of their earlier works were Andalusian, light in spirit and bubbling with fun. Their attempts at the more serious comedy have not been so successful nor so well received. The list of their plays is too long to permit discussion in detail. "The Flowers" (*Las flores*), played in 1901, is considered by many their masterpiece, though its first performance was not a success. Close to this comes "Malvaloca,"⁸ a rather didactic story of Andalusia, played in 1912. "The Women's Town" (*Puebla de las mujeres*, 1912) is fairly representative of their average work, and, though lacking action, is at least a real picture of life in a small Spanish village.

A play related to "The Women's Town" entitled, "Thus History is Written," (*Así se escribe la historia*), was recently (1917) performed in Madrid and met with an enthusiastic reception.

MARQUINA

The Spanish language lends itself easily to verse-making and the number of lyric poets in Spanish-speaking countries is legion. In the period of the classic Spanish drama, comedy as well as tragedy was in verse, but in the nineteenth century, from Moratín down, prose came to be used for non-tragic plays. In spite of the influence of Ibsen, Echegaray in the 80's wrote his "Great Galeoto" for the most part in verse, though he discards it in "The Son of Don Juan" and other Ibsenesque plays. There are in Spain today several writers of beautiful verse dramas, but their works are no more typical of the actual Spanish stage than are Rostand's "Cyrano" or "Chantecler" of the French, or the poem-dramas of Stephen Phillips of the English. It would be unfair, however, to discuss contemporary drama without including these poet-dramatists.

⁸English translation: "Malvaloca" by Jacob S. Fassett, Jr., New York 1916.

Eduardo Marquina (born 1879) is the master of the poetic drama in Spain, and has dramatized some stirring periods of Spanish history. The best are "The Daughters of the Cid" (*Las hijas del Cid*, 1908) and "The Sun has set in Flanders" (*En Flandes se ha puesto el sol*, 1910). The former deals, as its name implies, with a portion of the life of the great Spanish hero, the Cid Campeador, and the latter is laid in Flanders during the period when the Duke of Alva was endeavoring to subjugate the revolted provinces. This was played in Madrid by the greatest actress of Spain, Maria Guerrero and her company, and it is but fair to say that, while its verse is very beautiful, it is so good a drama that it could be played in prose and perhaps be equally good. That is, its real merit is not in its verse, but in its realistic scenes and its dialogue, which seems real in spite of the verse in which it is cast. In this it resembles somewhat Rostand's "Cyrano de Bergerac." Among Marquina's other verse dramas are: "The Flowers of Aragon" (*Las Flores de Aragón*, 1914), narrating the courtship of Ferdinand and Isabella in the stormy days of the reign of Henry IV; "The Great Captain" (*El Gran Capitán*, 1916), as its title indicates, treating of the deeds of the conqueror of Naples, Gonzalvo de Córdoba; "The Troubadour King" (*El Rey Trovador*, 1912), and "Doña María la Brava," (1915).

Marquina has shown that he can write a good drama in prose by giving up verse in the play contained in this volume, "When the Roses Bloom Again," (*Cuando florezcan los Rosales*, 1912). This is a love-play of the present, which may be classed as semi-pathological. As in his poetic dramas Marquina has been influenced by Rostand, in this play is seen the influence of Lavedan and Brieux. Another prose drama, "The Clinging Vine" (*La Hiedra*, 1914), is much inferior to "When the Roses Bloom Again," and has been called a concession to public taste, unworthy of a great writer. It is unjust to say that Marquina's dramas are "poetry rather than plays."⁹ If so, the same is true of Rostand's works. The judgment of the Spanish middle classes is worth at least as much as that of the critics as to what is dramatic, and by them "The Sun has set in Flanders" is characterized as the best Spanish play of the last quarter of a century.

⁹Fitzmaurice-Kelly, J. "Historia de la Literatura Española." Madrid, 1916. p. 333.

OTHER DRAMATISTS

An artist of extraordinary quality, the most *modernista* of the dramatists of Spain is Ramón del Valle-Inclán (born 1870), a poet-dramatist whose plays are far better read than played. They are works of culture, fantastic scenes, filled with poets and lovers, Harlequins and Columbines, and remind one of scenes in a beautiful garden, rather than suited to the stage. Doubtless he has been influenced largely by Maeterlinck in striving for the symbolic and the weird, but his meanings are elusive and his language unreal. Among his best are "A Story of Spring" (*Cuento de abril*, 1910) and "The Marchioness Rosalinda" (*La Marquesa Rosalinda*, 1914).

The most talented and inspired poet of Spain today is, without doubt, Francisco Villaespesa (born 1877). Lyric rather than dramatic, he has written, however, several dramas that are among the best of their kind in any language. The gem of dramatic verse in modern Spanish is his "Palace of Pearls" (*El Alcázar de las perlas*), produced in 1911. The Palace of Pearls is the Alhambra and the story treats of the building of that wonderful residence of the last Moorish kings. A native of the South, Villaespesa has put into his story all of the azure and the gold of its lace-like walls, all the silvery music of its marvellous fountains. In "Judith" (1915), he has treated the well-known story of Judith and Holofernes, and while it is good poetry he has scarcely added anything to the many previous dramatic treatments.

Gregorio Martínez Sierra (born 1881) is a journalist, novelist, poet and dramatist, the youngest of the popular playwrights of Spain today. A collection of dialogued poems in prose called, "Theater of Fantasies" (*Teatro de ensueño*, 1905), was his first dramatic work. These are not real plays and were not intended for stage performance. In his fantasy and in his symbolism he has imitated Maeterlinck and D'Annunzio; everywhere he is lyric and feminine. He is ultra-national in the idea pervading all his works that Spain is the most righteous, most noble land in all the world, and nowhere are women so virtuous and the family so sacred. This national spirit, coupled with a florid style, almost gongoristic, a beautiful blending of words, so pleasing to the Spanish ear, has won for him great popularity. Since 1905

Martínez Sierra has contributed many plays to the Spanish stage, the best of which is "The Cradle Song" (*Canción de cuna*, 1911).¹⁰ It is semi-romantic, but with many realistic touches, and the appeal is a universal one. The thesis of mother-love versus the convent life is real to the Spaniard, and Martínez Sierra shows the unrest that must arise from the crushing of the greatest longing of the woman-heart—motherhood. Of his other plays, some eight or ten are real dramas of domestic and social life; the rest are *zarzuelas* (musical comedies) and *sainetes* (skits) amazingly clever in plot and charming in composition.

THE "GÉNERO CHICO"—ZAMACOIS

One class of Spanish play deserves a separate discussion—the short play in one or two acts, known as the "*género chico*." The vogue of the short play began in 1880 when the Apollo theater in Madrid divided the evening performance into two parts or sections. This custom has been extended so that in many theaters today four or even five plays are given in a single evening, (a separate admission being charged to each,) as is the custom with moving picture houses in the United States. Two act plays are often introduced and called *dobles*, or double performances. So popular has the *género chico* become that nearly all the best dramatists of Spain have ventured into the field. Many of the plays of Benavente belong to this class, as do a majority of those of the Alvarez Quinteros, including much of their best work. Some of these have recently been translated into English.¹¹

The novelist and journalist, Eduardo Zamacois (a native of Cuba), has written a number of pleasing plays of this kind, from which is selected "The Passing of the Magi . . ." (*Los Reyes pasan . . .*, 1912). This, like most of the class, is a simple scene from everyday life—with a moral, if a moral may be drawn from a very natural course of events. The result is a protest against narrowness and a plea for

¹⁰English translation: "The Cradle Song," by John Garrett Underhill, in *Poet Lore*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 6. 1917.

¹¹"Five One Act Plays from the Spanish," with an article on "The One Act Play in Spain" by John Garrett Underhill. In *The Drama Quarterly*, No. 25, February, 1917.

liberty, for freedom to follow ideals though the world may condemn. "Illusions" are the real things of life, "that which is far from our life, but which is our real life," as Benavente has said. A volume of Zamacois' plays entitled "*Teatro Galante*" (1910) includes three plays, the best being "*Christmas Eve*" (*Nochebuena*, 1908), a pathetic picture of a *demi-mondaine* on Christmas Eve, abandoned by her lovers and her servants, to each of whom has come the call of home. Alone, listening to the Christmas carols on the streets, she lifts a glass of champagne and drinks,—as the curtain falls—to forget.

Zamacois visited the United States in 1917, giving a series of lectures on modern Spanish literature in New York and other cities. On one occasion he said: "I do not wish you to consider me the ambassador of intellectual Spain; I am only the doorkeeper, who would open to you the doors of the palace that you may behold that which is within."

CONCLUSION

One feature of the modern drama is the elimination of the monologue, of asides and remarks spoken to the audience rather than to the characters of the play. In 1883 Ibsen wrote, "The stage is for dramatic art only and declamation is not dramatic art." But the Spaniard is very fond of declamation—the classic traditions of Lope and Calderón accustom him to speeches and monologues many pages in length, so it was to be expected that the Spanish stage would be longer in rejecting these than would the stage of other countries. In Echegaray's "*Great Galeoto*" the speeches are tediously long and monologues are frequent, and though Echegaray tried to imitate Ibsen, this was a lesson he never learned. In the recent drama of Spain, however, we find a change, and only soliloquies of a few brief words, of interjections, broken phrases and exclamations are to be found in the works of Benavente, the Quinteros, etc.

In the recent Spanish drama, as in that of other countries, there is no traditional hero and no villain. These are often social forces, men in mass, and not individuals, or sometimes abstract ideas and ideals. Few of the modern Spanish dramas are real problem plays. The problem is there, because life is there. And this is the most significant thing

on the Spanish stage. The Quinteros once said that the public should be able to forget entirely that they are in the theater. For this reason the contemporary Spanish play lacks sensation, even lacks action. Often it goes so far as to become tedious, and the English or American reader or spectator misses the clever effects and dramatic coincidences to which he is accustomed. The realism of these writers is widely different from the realism of the French, though inspired by it, for the spirit of the nation is so different. The realism of Spain consists in bringing the drama nearer to nature and nearer to life, in reproducing on the stage the conversations one hears in the café, on the street and in the drawing room, and in leading the audience to forget, as the Quinteros have said, that they are in a theater at all, but to believe that they are actually present in that café or that drawing room and conversing with the actors. This is an impression one experiences often in the Spanish theaters, as in those of no other country, and this sort of realism is the most marked feature of the Spanish stage today.

CONTEMPORARY SPANISH
DRAMATISTS

CONTEMPORARY SPANISH DRAMATISTS

ELECTRA

A Drama in Five Acts

BY BENITO PÉREZ GALDÓS

*Played for the first time in the Teatro Español of Madrid,
January 30, 1901.*

PERSONS

ELECTRA (18)

EVARISTA (50), *wife of Don Urbano*

MAXIMO (35)

DON SALVADOR PANTOJA (50)

THE MARQUIS OF RONDA (58)

DON LEONARDO CUESTA (50), *a Broker*

DON URBANO GARCÍA YUSTE (55)

MARIANO, *assistant in the laboratory*

GIL, *a mathematician*

BALBINA, *an old servant*

PATROS, *a young servant*

JOSÉ, *an old manservant*

SISTER DOROTEA

A WORKMAN

THE SHADE OF ELEUTERIA

The action takes place in Madrid, in the present.

ELECTRA

ACT I

Hall luxuriously furnished in the mansion of the García Yuste's. At the right a passageway to the garden. At the

back communication with the other rooms of the building. At the right, in front, entrance to the room of ELECTRA.

SCENE I.

MARQUIS; JOSÉ, (*at the back*)

José.—They are in the garden. I will take them word.

Marquis.—Wait. I want to look around the room. I haven't visited the García Yuste's since they have been in their new house. . . . What luxury! . . . They are doing well. God gives them enough for everything, and this is nothing in comparison with what they give to charity. Always so generous! . . .

José.—Yes, indeed, sir.

Marquis.—And always so unassuming . . . but there is in the family, I believe, an interesting novelty.

José.—Novelty? Oh! yes . . . You mean . . .

Marquis.—Listen, José: will you do what I ask you?

José.—The Marquis knows that I shall never forget the fourteen years that I was in his service. . . . Command, your Excellency.

Marquis.—Well, then; today I have come solely for the purpose of making the acquaintance of this young lady that your master and mistress brought recently from a school in France.

José.—Miss Electra.

Marquis.—Can you tell me whether her uncle and aunt are pleased with her, whether the girl shows herself affectionate, grateful?

José.—Oh, yes! . . . They love her . . . But . . .

Marquis.—What?

José.—The girl is a little mischievous.

Marquis.—At her age . . .

José.—Playful, very playful, sir.

Marquis.—She is very pretty; as they say, an angel . . .

José.—An angel, yes, if there are angels very similar to demons. She drives us all crazy.

Marquis.—How I want to know her!

José.—Your Excellency may find her in the garden.

She passes the whole morning there throwing things about and playing pranks.

Marquis (*Looking into the garden*).—Pretty garden, more like a park; the old forest of the ancient palace of Gravelinas

José.—Yes, sir.

Marquis.—That magnificent house next door, doesn't that belong to your master too?

José.—With an entrance from the garden and also from the street. On the ground floor the nephew of my master and mistress, Mr. Maximo, has his laboratory. He is the first mathematician of Spain, and in . . . in . . .

Marquis.—Yes, he whom they call the "Wonderful Magician" . . . I knew him in London . . . I don't remember just when. . . . Is his wife living yet?

José.—The poor fellow was left a widower in February of last year. . . . He has two beautiful children.

Marquis.—Not long ago I renewed my acquaintance with Maximo, and though I do not frequent his house, for reasons of my own, we are great friends, the best friends in the world.

José.—I am very fond of him, too. He is so good!

Marquis.—And tell me now: Aren't your master and mistress sorry they brought this little demon here?

José (*Fearing that someone is coming*).—I shall tell your Excellency. . . . I have noticed . . . (*Sees DON URBANO coming from the garden*.) My master is coming . . .

Marquis.—You may go. . . .

SCENE II

MARQUIS; DON URBANO

Marquis (*Embracing him*).—My dear Urbano.

Don Urbano.—Marquis! How glad I am to see you!

Marquis.—And Evarista? . . .

Don Urbano.—Well. And wondering at the absence of the illustrious Marquis of Ronda.

Marquis.—Oh, you don't know what a winter we have passed!

Don Urbano.—And Virginia?

Marquis.—She is not well. The poor girl, always struggling with her attacks. She lives by main strength, stubbornness, I say, of her strong will.

Don Urbano.—Well, well . . . So? . . . (*Pointing to the garden.*) Shall we go down?

Marquis.—Pretty soon. Let me rest a moment. (*Sits down.*) Tell me, dear Urbano, about this charming girl, this Electra, whom you have just brought from school.

Don Urbano.—She wasn't still in school. She was living in Hendaye with some relatives of her mother. I never was in favor of bringing her to live with us, but Evarista took the idea into her head some time ago. Her only object is to test the character of the child, to see if we can make out of her a good woman, or if God reserves for us the shame that she should inherit the evil habits of her mother. You know she was the first cousin of my wife, and I need not repeat to you the excesses of Eleuteria between the years '80 and '85.

Marquis.—Of course not, of course not.

Don Urbano.—They were such that the family, grieved and mortified, broke off all relations with her. This child, whose father is not known, grew up with her mother until she was five years old. Then they took her to the convent of the Ursulines at Bayonne. There, either for short, or to embellish the name, they insisted on calling her Electra, which is quite a novelty.

Marquis.—Pardon me, not really a novelty, for her intimates called the unhappy mother, Eleuteria Diaz, Electra, not only for short, but also because they gave the name of Agamemnon to her father, who was a very valiant soldier, very unhappy in his married life.

Don Urbano.—I didn't know. . . . I never had anything to do with those people. Eleuteria, on account of her reputation for wildness, was pictured to me as a very repugnant person.

Marquis.—Good Heavens, my dear Urbano, don't be too severe. Remember that Eleuteria, whom we shall call Electra I, changed her life. . . . It must have been about the year '88. . . .

Don Urbano.—About that time. . . . Her repentance made considerable talk. She died in San José de la Penitencia in 1895, reformed and hating her past. . . .

Marquis (As if blaming him for his severity).—God pardoned her.

Don Urbano.—Yes, yes . . . pardon, I forget . . .

Marquis.—And you, now, are testing Electra II to see if she will turn out crooked or straight. And what has been the result of your tests?

Don Urbano.—Results rather doubtful, contradictory, varying each day, every hour. There are moments in which the child shows admirable qualities, badly concealed beneath her innocence; moments in which she seems the most crazy creature that God ever put into the world. At the very same time she charms you with her angelical candor, she frightens you with her diabolical smartness which she gets from her own innocence.

Marquis.—An excess of imagination perhaps, lack of balance. Is she lively?

Don Urbano.—As lively as electricity itself, mysterious, so abrupt that she frightens you. She tears up things, turns them upside down, but brightens them up.

Marquis (Rising).—I am burning with curiosity. Let us go and see her.

SCENE 3

MARQUIS; DON URBANO; CUESTA, (*at the back.*)

Cuesta (Enters with appearance of fatigue, takes out his portfolio of papers and turns to the table).—Marquis . . . And how are you all here? . . .

Marquis.—Hello, old Cuesta. What has our untiring agent to tell us? . . .

Cuesta (Sitting down. Seems to have an affection of the heart).—The untiring one . . . alas! . . . is tired now.

Don Urbano.—Well, what can you tell us of the rise yesterday in the Amalgamated stock?

Cuesta.—It came from Paris at two points.

Don Urbano.—Did you make our settlement?

Marquis.—And mine?

Cuesta.—I am coming to that. . . . (Takes out some papers from his portfolio and writes.) You shall have the

exact figures right away. I got the very best possible from the exchange.

Marquis.—Of course . . . the par value of the new shares being 79.50 . . . we having picked up the paper at a very low price . . .

Don Urbano.—Of course . . .

Cuesta.—Of course, the result has been splendid.

Marquis.—The ease with which we become rich, my dear Urbano, kindles in us the love of life and the enthusiasm for human beauty. Let's go into the garden.

Don Urbano (To CUESTA).—Are you coming?

Cuesta.—I shall need ten minutes to arrange my notes.

Don Urbano.—Then we'll leave you alone. Do you wish anything?

Cuesta (Buried in his notes).—No . . . Yes, a glass of water. I am burning up.

Don Urbano.—In a minute. (*Goes out with the MARQUIS into the garden.*)

SCENE 4

CUESTA; PATROS

Cuesta (Correcting his notes).—Ah! Yes, there was an error. To the Yuste's there are due . . . one million seven hundred thousand pesetas. To the Marquis of Ronda, two hundred twenty-two thousand. We must discount the twelve thousand odd, equal to nine thousand francs.

(Enter PATROS with glasses of water, sugar, cognac. She waits a moment until CUESTA finishes his calculation.)

Patros.—Shall I leave it here, Don Leonardo?

Cuesta.—Put it down and wait a minute . . . One million eight hundred . . . with the seven hundred ten . . . make . . . It's plain now. Good, good. . . . All right, Patros. . . . (*Puts his hand in his pocket, takes out some money and gives it to her.*)!

Patros.—Thank you, sir.

Cuesta.—That's the way I tell you that I expect a favor from you.

Patros.—Command me, Don Leonardo.

Cuesta.—Well . . . (*Fingering the sugar cone.*) You see . . .

Patros.—Aren't you going to put in any cognac? If you have come in warm, the water alone may hurt you.

Cuesta.—Yes, a little . . . Well, I wish . . . don't misunderstand me . . . I should like to speak a moment alone with Miss Electra. Knowing me as you do, you will understand that my object is the best and most honorable. I say this to remove any scruples you may have . . . (*Gathers up his papers.*) Before anyone comes, tell me what time and place would be the most appropriate?

Patros.—To say a few words to Miss Electra? (*Thinking.*) It would probably be when my master and mistress are busy with the lawyer . . . I shall be on the lookout. . . .

Cuesta.—If it could be today, so much the better.

Patros.—Will you be back soon?

Cuesta.—I shall be back and you can let me know quietly . . .

Patros.—Yes, yes . . . You may be sure I will. (*Gathers up the service and retires.*)

SCENE 5

CUESTA; PANTOJA (*Dressed entirely in black; enters meditating and absorbed in thought.*)

Cuesta.—Friend Pantoja, may God be with you. Are you well?

Pantoja (*Sighs.*)—Still living, my friend; that is to say, hoping.

Cuesta.—Hoping for a better life . . .

Pantoja.—Suffering in this one all the Lord wills in order to be worthy of the other.

Cuesta.—And your health?

Pantoja.—So, so. Bad, because troubles and disease afflict me; good, because pain gratifies me and suffering makes me rejoice. (*Uneasy and as if dominated by a fixed idea; looking towards the garden.*)

Cuesta.—You are an ascetic.

Pantoja.—Oh, that crazy girl! . . . See her running with the porter's boys, with the children of Maximo and

others of the neighborhood. When they let her break loose in childish pranks this Electra is in her glory.

Cuesta.—Beautiful doll! May it please God to make of her a woman of merit.

Pantoja.—An angel could come out of the graceful doll, of the fickle girl, more easily than it could of the woman.

Cuesta.—I don't understand you, Friend Pantoja.

Pantoja.—I do . . . Look, look, how they are playing. (*Alarmed.*) Heaven help me! Whom do I see there? Is that the Marquis of Ronda?

Cuesta.—His very self.

Pantoja.—That corrupt corruptor. The Don Juan of the past generation, he has decided not to retire in order not to disappoint Satan.

Cuesta.—In order that it may be said once more that there is no Paradise without its serpent.

Pantoja.—Oh, no! A serpent we had already! (*Nervous and fretful, he walks up and down the stage.*)

Cuesta.—Another thing, haven't you heard of the million that I am bringing them?

Pantoja (*Without paying much attention to the matter, fixed on another idea which is not manifest.*)—Yes, I know . . . yes . . . We gained a lot.

Cuesta.—Evarista will finish her great work of charity. . . .

Pantoja (*Mechanically*).—Yes.

Cuesta.—And you will give larger sums to San José de la Penitencia.

Pantoja.—Yes . . . (*Repeating a fixed idea.*) We had a serpent already. (*Aloud.*) What were you saying to me, Friend Cuesta?

Cuesta.—That . . .

Pantoja.—I beg your pardon . . . Is it a fact that our neighbor next door, our wonderful sage, inventor and almost miracle-worker, is thinking of changing his residence?

Cuesta.—Who? Maximo? I think so. It seems that in Bilbao and in Barcelona they welcome with enthusiasm his wonderful studies of new applications of electricity; and they offer him all the capital he needs to develop these discoveries.

Pantoja (*Meditating*).—Oh! Capital, within my means, I would give it to him, provided he . . .

SCENE 6

PANTOJA; CUESTA; EVARISTA; DON URBANO; THE MARQUIS, (*Who come in from the garden*).

Evarista (*Releasing the arm of the MARQUIS*).—Congratulations, Cuesta. Pantoja, how glad I am to see you today! (*CUESTA and PANTOJA bow and kiss her hand respectfully. She sits down at the right, the MARQUIS standing at her side. The other three form a group at the left, talking business.*)

Marquis (*Resuming with Evarista an interrupted conversation*).—In this way you will pass not only into history, but into the “Lives of the Saints.”

Evarista.—Marquis, don’t praise that which is absolutely lacking in merit. We have no children; God gave us greater and greater wealth. Each year a new inheritance came to us. Without troubling ourselves in the least nor scheming in any way, the margin of our income, managed in clever operations by our friend Cuesta, has brought us more wealth without our knowing it. We bought a country place and that very year the rise in produce tripled its value; we acquired a piece of barren land and found that it is an immense storehouse of coal, of iron, of lead . . . What does this mean, Marquis?

Marquis.—It means, my dear friend, that when God heaps so many riches on one who does not desire them nor esteem them, it means very clearly that he does so that they may be used to his service.

Evarista.—Exactly. And interpreting it in the same way, I hasten to fulfill the divine will. That which Cuesta brings me today will merely pass through my hands, and with this I shall have given to the Patrocinio seven whole millions, and I shall do even more, in order that the establishment and school in Madrid may have all the decorations and magnificence that is fitting to so great an institution. . . . We shall stimulate the work of the schools in Valencia and Cadiz . . .

Pantoja (*Passing the group on the right*).—Without forgetting, my friend, the institution for higher instruction which is to be a sanctuary of true science. . . .

Evarista.—My friend Pantoja knows very well that I never cease thinking of it.

Don Urbano (Passing also to the right).—We are thinking of it night and day.

Marquis.—Fine, fine. (*Rises.*)

Evarista (To CUESTA, who also passes to the right).—And now, Leonardo, what are we going to do?

Cuesta (Sitting down by the side of EVARISTA, proposes to her new transactions.)—We shall limit ourselves to carrying over some sums. . . .

Pantoja (Standing at the left of EVARISTA).—Or with premiums. . . .

Marquis (Passing across the stage with DON URBANO).—Allow me to ask, my dear Urbano, that proclaiming the merits of your wife, you do not forget mine, ours; I speak for my wife and myself. Virginia has already given to Las Esclavas the half of our fortune.

Don Urbano.—One of the most important in Andalusia.

Marquis.—And in our wills we leave them all, except a portion which we have destined to fulfill certain obligations and for poor relations. . . .

Don Urbano.—Very good But, as I understood, a few years ago you were not so well satisfied with Virginia's generous piety.

Marquis.—That's true. But in the end I learned the catechism. I am in it body and soul. She has converted me, has regenerated me.

Don Urbano.—As my Evarista has done me.

Marquis.—To preserve peace in the family, I began by temporizing, by yielding, and yielding and temporizing I have come to this point. It doesn't worry me, no. Today I live in a beatific peace, cured of my old manias. I have come to believe that Virginia will not only save her own soul, but mine, too.

Don Urbano.—The same with me That she will save me.

Marquis.—It is certain that we have the initiative in nothing.

Don Urbano.—In nothing, my dear Marquis.

Marquis.—Why, sometimes even breathing is forbidden us.

Don Urbano.—Even breathing forbidden

Marquis.—But we live in tranquility.

Don Urbano.—We serve God without any effort

Marquis.—Our blessed wives precede us along the road to a blessed eternity . . . Have no fear that they will leave us behind.

Don Urbano.—Of course not.

Evarista.—Urbano?

Don Urbano (Hastening to her).—What?

Evarista.—Put yourself at the disposal of Cuesta for the settlement and to give over to the Fathers . . .

Don Urbano.—This very day. (*CUESTA rises.*)

Evarista.—Another thing. Go down a moment and tell Electra that she has played three hours now . . .

Pantoja (In a commanding tone).—Tell her to come up. She has frisked about too much already.

Don Urbano.—I am going. (*Seeing ELECTRA coming.*) Here she is now.

SCENE 7

THE SAME; ELECTRA, after her, MAXIMO

Electra (Enters running and laughing, followed by MAXIMO, whom she is out-distancing. Her laughter is that of childish fear).—Don't you catch me . . . Brute, I'll show you.

Maximo (Carries in one hand various objects which will be indicated, in the other a large branch of poplar, which he handles like a whip).—Rogue, if I catch you . . . !

Electra (Without noticing the others on the stage, runs around with childlike agility, and takes refuge in the skirts of DOÑA EVARISTA, kneeling at her feet and throwing her arms around her waist).—I am safe. . . Aunt, tell him to go away.

Maximo.—Where is the crazy girl? (*With jesting threats*) Ah! She knows where to go.

Evarista.—Why, girl, when will you learn gravity? Maximo, you are as much a child as she.

Maximo (Showing what he is carrying).—Look what she has done for me. She broke these two test tubes . . . And then . . . see these papers on which I had calculations that represent enormous work. (*Shows the papers, holding them up.*) This one she made a bird of; that one she gave to the children to paint donkeys and elephants on . . . and an ironclad firing at a castle.

Pantoja.—Why, did she go into the laboratory?

Maximo.—And spoiled my discipline of the children and turned everything upside down.

Pantoja (With severity).—But, my dear young lady . . .

Evarista.—Electra!

Marquis.—Blessed childhood! (*With enthusiasm.*) Electra, you big child, blessed be your pranks. Keep as long as you can your precious gaiety.

Electra.—I didn't break the cylinders. It was Pepito. . . . The papers full of scratches, I did take them, thinking they were of no use.

Cuesta.—Come, let's make peace.

Maximo.—Peace. (*To ELECTRA.*) All right, I'll spare your life, I'll excuse you this time . . . Here. (*Gives her the switch.* ELECTRA takes it, whipping him severely.)

ELECTRA.—This for what you have said to me. (*Whipping him with force.*) This for what you didn't say.

Maximo.—Why, what didn't I say?

Pantoja.—Gravity, reason.

Evarista.—What have I told you?

Maximo.—Truths that will be very useful to her . . . That she should learn for herself many things that she doesn't know, that she should open wide her eyes and cast them over human life to see that all is not gaiety, that there are also duties, sorrows, sacrifices . . .

Electra.—Heavens, how it frightens me! (*All surround her in the center of the stage, except PANTOJA who hastens to the side of EVARISTA.*)

Cuesta.—It is best not to stimulate her pranks by applause.

Don Urbano.—And to show her a little of severity.

Maximo.—No one can outdo me in severity . . . Isn't it true, girl, that I am very severe and that you thank me for it? Say that you thank me for it.

Electra (Whipping him lightly).—Wise accuser! If this were a real whip I should whip you with greater pleasure.

Maximo (Smiling and amused).—Charming one! Whip me, Electra.

Electra (Whipping him with gentleness).—You, no, for I haven't confidence. . . . A little, no more . . . so . . . (*Whipping the others.*) And you . . . and you . . . a little.

Evarista.—Why don't you go and play the piano for these gentlemen?

Maximo.—Why, she doesn't study a note! Her indolence is as great as her aptitude for all the arts.

Cuesta.—Let her show us her watercolors and drawings. Come and see, Marquis. (*They all group themselves around the table, except EVARISTA and PANTOJA, who talk aside.*)

Electra.—Why, yes! (*Looking for her sketch book among the books and papers that are on the table.*) You will see, I am a great artist.

Maximo.—Praise yourself, chatterbox.

Electra (*Untying the ribbon of her sketch book.*)—You run me down, I'll brag, we'll see who comes out the better. . . . Oh, (*Showing some drawings*) you are astonished. What do you say to these magnificent sketches of landscapes, of animals that look like people, of people that look like animals? (*All are amazed, looking at the drawings which pass from hand to hand.*)

Evarista (*Leaving the central group, begins a conversation with PANTOJA.*)—You are right, Salvador. You always are, and now, in the case of Electra, your reasoning is like a splendid orb of light, which puts us all in the shade.

Pantoja.—This light which you think intelligence, is not. It is only the brightness of an intense fire that burns within: will. By this force, which I owe to God, I have been able to mend my error.

Evarista.—After the confidences which you made to me last night, I see more clearly your right to intervene in the education of this crazyhead. . . .

Pantoja.—To indicate the way for her; to point out to her high ends. . . .

Evarista.—A right which implies inexcusable duties. . . .

Pantoja.—Oh, how glad I am that you recognize it, my dear friend! I feared that my confidence of last night, a dark story which blackens the best years of my life, would make me lose your esteem!

Evarista.—No, my friend, no. As a man you have been subject to human weaknesses. But the sinner has been regenerated, punishing himself with the mortification that repentance brings, and strengthening it in the practice of virtue.

Pantoja.—Sadness, love of solitude, contempt for vanities

were my salvation. Well, my reparation would not be complete if I did not take care to direct this girl, to keep her from harm. If we lack care, it would be easy for her to go the way of her mother.

Evarista.—My opinion is that you should talk to her. . . .

Pantoja.—Alone.

Evarista.—That's what I think: alone. Give her to understand in a delicate way the authority you have over her.

Pantoja.—Yes . . . yes . . . That is my wish.
(Continues in a low voice.)

Electra (*In the central group quarreling with MAXIMO.*)—Stop, stop! What do you know? (*Showing a drawing.*) This brute says that the bird looks like a pensive old man, and the woman like a pale lobster.

Marquis.—Oh, no . . . this is very good! . . .

Maximo.—Sometimes when she takes the least care, she gets wonderful results.

Cuesta.—The truth is that this landscape, with the distant sea and these trunks . . .

Electra.—My specialty. Don't you know what it is? Well, old trunks, walls in ruins. I paint well what I don't know: sadness, the past, death. Present gaiety, youth, I can't do them. (*With sorrow.*) I am a great artist for all that I have not experienced.

Don Urbano.—What grace!

Cuesta.—Delightful!

Marquis.—How bright! It charms me to hear her.

Maximo.—Soon reflection will come, responsibilities . . .

Electra (*Making fun of MAXIMO.*)—Reason, seriousness! Look at the sage . . . gloomy. I shall have all this whenever I like . . . and more than you.

Maximo.—We shall see, we shall see.

Pantoja (*Who has been listening to the group.*)—I can't hide from you that I do not like the familiarity of the girl with the nephew of Urbano.

Evarista.—We shall correct that. But bear in mind that Maximo is an honorable man, sensible. . . .

Pantoja.—Yes, yes, but . . . My friend, in the paths of confidence the strongest stumble and fall; a sad experience has taught me that.

Electra (In the central group).—I shall settle down when it suits me. Nobody should become serious until God commands. No one should say, “Alas! alas!” until sorrow comes.

Marquis.—That’s so.

Cuesta.—And then one learns practical things.

Electra.—Of course, when God comes and says to me: “Child, here is sorrow, suffering, doubt . . .”

Maximo.—He will say it . . . and soon.

Evarista.—Electra, my daughter, don’t be silly.

Electra.—Aunt, it is Maximo, who . . . (*Goes to her aunt’s side.*)

Don Urbano.—Maximo is right.

Cuesta.—Certainly. (*CUESTA and DON URBANO also go to side of EVARISTA, leaving MAXIMO and the MARQUIS alone at the left.*)

Maximo.—May I know, Marquis, the result of your first observations?

Marquis.—The girl has charmed me. I see there is no exaggeration in what you told me.

Maximo.—And doesn’t your penetration discover underneath these jests something that . . .

Marquis.—I understand . . . moral beauty, common sense. I haven’t had time yet for such discoveries. I shall continue my observations.

Maximo.—Because I, to tell the truth, consecrated to science at an early age, know very little of the world, and human characters are for me a writing that I can scarcely decipher.

Marquis.—Well, in this writing and in others I know how to read fluently.

Maximo.—Will you come to my house?

Marquis.—For a while. It is possible that my wife may scold me if she knows that I have visited the laboratory of electricity and the manufactory of light. But Virginia will not be very severe. I may venture . . . afterwards I shall return here under pretext of seeing the girl at the piano, I shall talk to her and continue my studies.

Maximo (Aloud).—Are you coming, Marquis?

Don Urbano.—You are leaving us?

Marquis.—I am going with my friend for a while.

Evarista.—Marquis, I am much vexed at your long ab-

sence, much vexed. You cannot make amends better than by lunching with us today. It is a punishment, Don Juan; it is penitence.

Marquis.—I accept as atonement for my guilt, and I bless the hand that punishes me.

Evarista.—You, Maximo, will you come too.

Maximo.—If they leave me free at that hour I shall come.

Electra.—Don't come . . . for Heaven's sake, don't come. (*With a joy that she cannot hide*.) You are going to come? Say, yes. (*Correcting herself*.) No, no; say, no.

Maximo.—Oh! You can't get rid of me. Crazy girl, you will come to your senses perhaps.

Electra.—And you will lose yours, foolish sage, old . . . (*Follows him with her glances until he leaves*. *MAXIMO* and the *MARQUIS* go out through the garden. *JOSÉ* enters at the back.)

SCENE 8

ELECTRA; EVARISTA; DON URBANO; PANTOJA; CUESTA;
JOSÉ

José (Announcing).—The Mother Superior of San José de la Penitencia.

Pantoja.—Oh, my good Sister Barbara de la Cruz . . . !

Evarista.—Let her come in here. (*Getting up*.) No, in the salon. Come.

Pantoja.—What a fortunate opportunity. So I shall not have to go to the convent.

Evarista.—Girl, go to your studies. (*Indicating the next room*.)

Cuesta (Taking leave).—I am going. I shall come back presently.

Evarista.—Good-bye.

Cuesta (Aside to Electra).—Will they leave you alone?

Pantoja (Hastening to ELECTRA).—Cultivate with care, Electra, this sublime art. Consecrate all your talent to the great Bach . . . in order that you may assimilate the religious style. (*All leave except ELECTRA*.)

SCENE 9

ELECTRA; *presently* CUESTA

Electra (Humming a church psalm, gathers up her drawings and arranges them).—Bach . . . in order that I may assimilate . . . How fine! . . . the religious style (Sings).

Cuesta (Enters at the back, concealing himself).—Alone!

Electra (Sings some liturgical notes. Sees CUESTA).—Why, didn't you go, Don Leonardo?

Cuesta (Timidly).—Yes; but I came back, my daughter. I want to talk with you.

Electra (A little frightened).—With me!

Cuesta.—The matter is a delicate one, very delicate . . . (With fatigue, breathing with difficulty.) Pardon me . . . I suffer from my heart . . . I cannot stand. (ELECTRA hands him a chair. He sits down.) Yes; the matter is such a delicate one that I do not know where to begin.

Electra.—Goodness, what is it?

Cuesta (Becoming animated).—Electra, I knew your mother.

Electra.—Ah! My mother was very unhappy.

Cuesta.—What do you mean by unhappy?

Electra.—Why . . . she lived among bad people who would not let her be as good as she wished.

Cuesta.—Oh! Without knowing it you have told a great truth . . . Do you remember your mother? . . . Do you think of her?

Electra.—My mother is for me a vague memory, but a sweet one; an image that never leaves me . . . I keep her alive in my heart, for she is still only a great memory and in this memory my eyes are always seeking anxiously to see her. My poor mother! (Raises her handkerchief to her eyes, CUESTA sighs.) Tell me, Don Leonardo, when did you know my mother? Was she still very young?

Cuesta.—You were a tiny little thing. We used to tickle you to make you laugh; your laughter seemed an enchantment to me, the joy of Nature.

Electra.—You see why I have turned out so foolish, so

mischiefous, so thoughtless . . . And sometimes you used to take me in your arms?

Cuesta.—Many times.

Electra (*Smiling without having dried her tears*).—And didn't I pull your moustache sometimes?

Cuesta.—Sometimes so hard that you hurt me.

Electra.—You would slap me on my hands.

Cuesta.—Come, come!

Electra.—Why don't you know, I believe they still hurt . . . !

Cuesta (*Impatient to come to his subject*).—But let's come to the subject. I warn you, Electra, that this is strictly confidential. It must be between us two.

Electra.—Oh, you frighten me, Don Leonardo.

Cuesta.—There is no cause for fear. You see in me a friend, the best of friends; you will see in this act the purest interest, the highest sentiments.

Electra (*Confused*).—Yes, yes; I don't doubt it . . . but . . .

Cuesta.—You will see why I take this step . . . Although I am not very old, I do not feel that I have the vitality for very long. A widower for twenty years, I have no other family than my daughter Paca, married and gone away. I am almost alone in the world, with my foot in the stirrup to pass over to the other . . . and my solitude, alas! seems as if it would carry me there more quickly . . . (*With great difficulty in expressing himself*) But before I go . . . (*Pause*) . . . Electra, I thought about you a great deal before they brought you to Madrid, and on seeing you, my God! I have thought, I have felt . . . how shall I say it? . . . a sweet affection, the purest of affections, mingled with the clamors of my conscience.

Electra (*Astounded*).—Conscience! What a grave thing that must be! Mine is like a babe that is still in the cradle.

Cuesta (*With sadness*).—Mine is old and full of memories. I repeat, it points out to me without ceasing the grave errors of my life.

Electra.—You . . . ! Grave errors, and you so good!

Cuesta.—Yes, yes; good, good . . . and a sinner. In short, let us leave the errors and let us come to their consequences. I do not wish that you should live unprotected. You do not possess any fortune. It is doubtful whether the

protection of Urbano and Evarista will be constant. How can I consent that you should be left poor and destitute some day when least expected.

Electra (With a painful struggle between her consciousness and her innocence).—I don't know whether I understand . . . I don't know whether I ought to understand.

Cuesta.—The most delicate thing would be to understand without telling me so, and accept my protection without thanking me. My duty and your rights go hand in hand. Thanks to me, Electra, there will not be broken the thread that unites each creature with those that have been and with those that still exist . . . And if I have made up my mind to broach this question today, it is because . . . because a short time ago there came over me the fear of sudden death. My father and my brother died as if struck by lightning. The lesion of the heart, destroyer of my family, I have it too. (*Pointing to his heart.*) It is a doleful clock that counts for me the days, the hours . . . I cannot put this off. Death must not surprise me, leaving this precious one without protection. I cannot, I cannot wait. . . . I must end by telling you, my daughter, that you may be assured of a modest fortune. . . .

Electra.—A modest fortune . . . I!

Cuesta.—Sufficient to live in a fitting independence. . . .

Electra (Confused).—And I . . . what merit have I for . . . ? Pardon me . . . I cannot convince myself . . . of . . .

Cuesta.—It will come, the conviction will come. . . .

Electra.—And why do you not speak of this matter to my uncle and aunt?

Cuesta (Preoccupied).—Because . . . I will tell them in time. Just now, only you must know my intention.

Electra.—But . . .

Cuesta (With emotion, rising).—And now, Electra, will you love this poor invalid whose days are numbered?

Electra.—Yes . . . It is easy for me to love! But don't talk of dying, Don Leonardo.

Cuesta.—It comforts me much to know that you will weep.

Electra.—Don't make me begin now . . .

Cuesta (Hastening his departure to conquer his emotions).—Good-bye, my daughter.

Electra.—Good-bye . . . (*Detaining him.*) And what name shall I give you?

Cuesta.—That of friend, no more. Good-bye. (*Releasing himself to leave. Goes out at the back. ELECTRA gazes after him until he disappears.*)

SCENE 10

ELECTRA; THE MARQUIS

Electra (Meditating).—Goodness, what am I to think? His broken sentences say more than if they were completed. My darling mother! (*THE MARQUIS, who enters from the garden, advances slowly.*) Ah! Marquis.

Marquis.—Did I frighten you?

Electra.—Not at all; just surprised me. If you have come to hear me play, the journey is in vain, I shall not study to-day.

Marquis.—I am glad. Then we shall be able to talk . . . Scarcely have I met you, and I am filled with admiration of your charms, and knowing something of your character, I am anxious to know more . . . You wonder perhaps at this curiosity of mine and may think it somewhat impertinent.

Electra.—Oh, no, sir! I, too, am curious, and allow me to ask: Are you a friend of Maximo?

Marquis.—I love him and admire him very much . . . Strange thing, isn't it?

Electra.—To me it seems quite natural.

Marquis.—You are but a girl and perhaps you cannot understand the reasons for my friendship with the "Wonderful Magician" . . . Let's see if you understand me.

✓ *Electra.*—Explain it to me clearly.

Marquis.—The society that I frequent, the circle of my own family and the habits of my house produce in me an asphyxiating effect. Almost without knowing it, through mere instinct of self-preservation, I throw myself at times into an atmosphere that I can breathe. My eyes turn to science, to Nature . . . and Maximo is all this.

Electra.—Air you can breathe, life . . . Why you know, Marquis, it seems to me that I understand?

Marquis.—Well, child, you are not stupid at all. You must know, too, that I feel for this fellow an immense interest.

Electra.—You love him and admire him for his great qualities . . .

Marquis.—And I am sorry for him on account of his misfortunes.

Electra (Surprised).—Maximo unfortunate!

Marquis.—What greater misfortune than the solitude in which he lives? His premature widowerhood has submerged him in the deepest studies, and I fear for his health.

Electra.—His children console him and keep him company. You have seen them today. What pretty dears! The older, who is five years old now, is a marvel of intelligence. In the little one, who is two, I see all the graces in the world. I adore them; I dream of them and I should like very much to be their nurse.

Marquis.—Poor Maximo, wrapped in his studies, cannot attend to them as he ought.

Electra.—Of course not; that's what I say.

Marquis.—It is very evident, Maximo needs a wife. But . . . here is where my troubles begin and my doubts. No matter where I look I cannot find a woman who is worthy to share in the life of the great man.

Electra.—You will not find her. There is none, there is none. Because for Maximo you must seek a woman of great sense.

Marquis.—That's it, of great sense.

Electra.—Just the opposite from me, for I have none, none, none.

Marquis.—I shouldn't say that.

Electra.—Another thing. When you hear me say silly things to him and call him brute, old man, foolish sage, you mustn't think that I say them seriously. It's all in fun, Marquis.

Marquis.—Of course, of course, I understood that.

Electra.—Fun, impertinent perhaps, for Maximo is very serious . . . Do you think, sir, that I ought to become very sober?

Marquis.—Oh, no! All creatures are as God made them. One must not restrain one's self. It is not necessary to be sober to be good.

Electra.—Well, you see, Marquis, I who don't know anything, I have thought this same way. (*PANTOJA appears in the background.*)

Pantoja (Aside in the doorway).—That incorrigible libertine . . . that veteran of vice dares to cast his poisonous glance upon this flower. (*Advances slowly.*)

Marquis (Aside).—Well! The dark shade has come between us and we cannot talk any more.

Electra.—The Marquis came to hear me play, but I am very dull. We shall leave it for another day.

Marquis.—You know that the great Beethoven is my passion. They have told me that Electra interprets him splendidly and I was hoping to hear his Sonata Pathetique and the Moonlight Sonata . . . but we have amused ourselves chattering and since there is no opportunity . . .

Pantoja (With asperity).—Yes, the study hour is over now.

Marquis (Recovering his society manner).—Another day, perhaps. My friend, Virginia and I shall be much pleased if you will honor us with your counsel with reference to the convent of Las Esclavas.

Pantoja.—Yes, yes; I shall go this afternoon to see Virginia and we can talk it over.

Marquis.—You will find her at the convent all the afternoon. And since I am *de trop* here . . . (*With a gesture of leaving.*)

Electra.—No. Not at all, Marquis.

Marquis.—I must go—with the music—to the laboratory of Maximo.

Pantoja.—Yes, there you will find much diversion.

Marquis.—Good-bye, my esteemed friend.

Pantoja.—May God be with you. (*The MARQUIS goes towards the garden.*)

SCENE II

ELECTRA; PANTOJA

Pantoja (With vivacity).—What was he saying? What was this corruptor of innocence telling you?

Electra.—Nothing. Stories, funny anecdotes . . .

Pantoja.—Ah, stories! Have no confidence in funny anecdotes and pleasant tales, for these jasmines hide a poisonous sting . . . I notice that you were disturbed as when one hears the gliding of a serpent among the bushes.

Electra.—Oh, no!

Pantoja.—The uneasiness which unseemly conversation produces will be calmed by my beneficent and healthful words.

Electra.—You are a poet, Sir Pantoja, and I am pleased to listen to you.

Pantoja (*Pointing out a chair to her; they both sit down*).—My daughter, I am going to give you an explanation of the intense affection which you have noticed in me. Have you noticed it?

Electra.—Yes, sir.

Pantoja.—An explantion which is equivalent to revealing a secret.

Electra (*Much frightened*).—Oh, Heavens, I am trembling! . . .

Pantoja.—Be calm, my daughter. Listen first to that which is for me very sad. Electra, I have been very wicked.

Electra.—But you really give the impression of a saint!

Pantoja.—I was very wicked, I say, on one occasion of my life. (*Sighing.*) It was many years ago.

Electra (*With interest*).—How many? Can I remember the time when you were so wicked, Don Salvador?

Pantoja.—No. When I debased myself, when I blinded myself in sin, you were not yet born.

Electra.—But I was born . . .

Pantoja (*After a pause*).—Of course . . .

Electra.—I was born . . . For Heaven's sake, Sir Pantoja, finish quickly . . .

Pantoja.—Your confusion indicates to me that we must turn our eyes from the past. The present is for us very satisfactory.

Electra.—Why?

Pantoja.—Because in me you will have a support, a protector for your whole life. An ineffable happiness it is for me to care for a being so noble and beautiful, to defend you from all harm, to guard you, to watch over you, to guide you in order that you may keep yourself always virtuous and pure, in order that neither shadow nor breath of

evil may ever touch you. You are a child that seems an angel. I am not satisfied that you seem so, I wish you to be one.

Electra (Coldly).—An angel that belongs to you . . . And in this I am to see an act of charity, extraordinary and sublime?

Pantoja.—It is not charity, it is duty. To my duty to protect you there is added your right to be protected.

Electra.—This confidence, this authority . . .

Pantoja.—Is born of my intense affection, as force is born of heat. And my protection is the work of my conscience.

Electra (Rises with great agitation. Moving away from PANTOJA, she exclaims aside).—Two, Heavens, two protectors! And this one wishes to force me. Horrible confusion! (*Aloud.*) Sir Pantoja, I respect you, I admire your virtues. But your authority over me I do not see clearly, and, pardon my boldness, obedience, submission, I owe only to my aunt.

Pantoja.—It is all the same. Evarista does me the honor to consult me in all her affairs. Obeying her, you obey me.

Electra.—And my aunt wishes, too, that I should become an angel, her angel, your angel . . .

Pantoja.—The angel of everyone, of God chiefly. Be convinced that you have fallen into good hands and be satisfied, my dear daughter, let yourself grow up in virtue, in purity.

Electra (With displeasure).—Very good, sir. Let them purify me. But am I very wicked?

Pantoja.—You may come to be so. To prevent a disease is more prudent than to cure it after it has entered into the system.

Electra.—Alas for me! (*Raising her eyes and remaining as in an ecstasy, she utters a deep sigh. Pause.*)

Pantoja.—Why do you sigh so?

Electra.—Let my heart relieve itself. The consciences of others weigh heavily upon me.

SCENE 12

ELECTRA; PANTOJA; EVARISTA, (*in the background*)

Evarista.—Friend Pantoja, Mother Barbara de la Cruz

is waiting to take leave of you and receive your final orders.

Pantoja.—Oh, I forgot . . . I am coming at once.
(Aside to EVARISTA.) We have been talking. Watch carefully. We must look out for evil influences. *(Before leaving at the back, the MARQUIS and MAXIMO come in at the right.)*

SCENE 13

ELECTRA; EVARISTA; THE MARQUIS; MAXIMO

Marquis.—I am a little late.

Evarista.—Not at all. You were in Maximo's study?
(Two groups are formed. ELECTRA and MAXIMO at the left; EVARISTA and the MARQUIS at the right.)

Marquis.—Yes, madam. That man is a wonder. *(Continues thinking over what he has seen in the laboratory.)*

Electra (*Sighing*).—Yes, Maximo, I have to consult with you about a serious matter.

Maximo (*With much interest*).—Tell me quickly.

Electra (*Looking cautiously at the other group*).—I cannot now.

Maximo.—When?

Electra.—I don't know . . . I don't know when I shall be able to tell you . . . It isn't a thing that can be told in two words.

Maximo.—Ah, poor little girl! That which I told you . . . Are you beginning to note already the serious things of life, its bitternesses, its duties?

Electra.—Perhaps.

Maximo (*Looking at her fixedly, with great interest*).—I note in your face a cloud of sadness, of fear . . . a great novelty for you.

Electra.—They wish to annihilate me, to enslave me, to reduce me to something . . . angelical . . . I do not understand it.

Maximo (*With energy*).—Do not consent to it, for Heaven's sake . . . Electra, defend yourself.

Electra.—What do you advise me to do to avoid it?

Maximo (*Without hesitation*).—Independence.

Electra.—Independence!

Maximo.—Emancipation . . . more clearly, insubordination.

Electra.—You mean that I shall be able to do anything I take a notion to, to play all I wish, to enter into your house as into a promised land, to throw things around with your children, and take them into the garden with me, or wherever I like?

Maximo.—All this, and more.

Electra.—Be careful what you are saying . . . !

Maximo.—I know what I am saying.

Electra.—But you have recommended me to do quite the contrary!

Maximo (*Looking at her fixedly*).—In your face and in your eyes I see a radical change in the conditions of your life. You are afraid, Electra.

Electra.—Yes. (*Fearful.*)

Maximo.—You . . . (*Doubting what verb to use. Starts to say "love" and does not dare.*) desire something with great energy.

Electra (*Effusively*).—Yes. (*Pause.*) And you tell me against fears and desires . . . insubordination.

Maximo.—Yes, give your impulses free rein in order that what is in you may show itself and we may know what you are.

Electra.—What I am? Do you wish to know?

Maximo.—Your heart . . .

Electra.—My secrets . . .

Maximo.—Your heart . . . In it is everything.

Electra (*Noticing that EVARISTA is watching her.*)—Hush! They are looking at us.

SCENE 14

THE SAME; DON URBANO; PANTOJA, (*at the back*)

Don Urbano.—Shall we lunch?

Pantoja (*To EVARISTA, startled, seeing ELECTRA with MAXIMO*)—Why, daughter, you leave her alone with Mephistopheles?

Evarista.—There is no cause for alarm, Friend Pantoja.

Marquis (*Laughing*).—Of course not, for this Mephistopheles is a saint! (*Gives his arm to EVARISTA.*)

Pantoja (*Imperiously, taking ELECTRA by the hand to lead*

her away).—With me! (ELECTRA, going with PANTOJA, turns her head to look at MAXIMO.)

Maximo (Looking at ELECTRA and PANTOJA).—With you . . . ? We shall see with whom. (MAXIMO and DON URBANO go out last.)

ACT II

The same decoration

SCENE I

EVARISTA; DON URBANO, (*seated together at the table, occupied with business*); BALBINA, (*who is serving the lady with a cup of broth.*)

Don Urbano (*Preparing to write*).—What have you said to the Rector of the Patrocinio?

Evarista (*With the cup in her hand*).—Why you know already. That the plan and the estimate suit us and that now we shall close with the contractor.

Don Urbano.—Don't forget that the proposition of the latter reaches . . . (*Reading a paper.*) three hundred twenty thousand pesetas.

Evarista.—No matter. There still remains to us enough to continue helping the Ambulance Station. (*To BALBINA, who takes away the cup.*) Don't forget what I told you to do.

Balbina.—I shall watch, madam. I think there is no harm in this play of Miss Electra. If she receives letters and notes from a suitor, it is for pastime and to have another motive for laughter and gaiety.

Evarista.—But how do they get to the house? . . .

Balbina.—The letters of these dandies? I don't know yet. But I shall watch Patros, for it seems to me . . .

Evarista.—Take great care and tell me what you discover. . . .

Balbina.—You may be sure I will, madam. (*Exit BALBINA.*)

SCENE 2

THE SAME; MAXIMO, (*at the back, in haste, with plans and papers*)

Maximo.—Do I disturb you?

Evarista.—No, my son. Come in.

Maximo.—Two minutes, Aunt.

Don Urbano.—Do you come from the Ministry?

Maximo.—I have just had a conference with the Bilbainos. Today is a day of trial for me. Excessive work, a thousand affairs, and in addition the house turned upside down.

Evarista.—Why, what has happened? Balbina told me that you dismissed your servants yesterday.

Maximo.—They served me miserably, they robbed me . . . I am alone with the clerk and the nurse.

Evarista.—Come and eat here.

Maximo.—And leave the children there? If I bring them, they will bother you and will upset the house.

Evarista.—Don't bring them, no. I adore children, but I don't like them near me. They throw all my things around and soil everything. The confusion of their stamping, their loud laughing and their quarreling drives me crazy. Then the fear that they will fall, that the cats will scratch them, that they will get wet, that they will bump their heads.

Maximo.—I should prefer that you send me a cook . . .

Evarista.—Henrietta can go. Tell her, Urbano. We shall not forget.

Maximo (*Preparing to leave*).—All right.

Evarista.—Wait a minute. It seems your affairs are getting along well. You know what I have told you: if the "Wonderful Magician" needs more capital for the exploiting of his inventions, he has only to call upon us . . .

Maximo.—Thank you, Aunt. I have at my disposal all the money I need . . .

Don Urbano.—Within a few years the "Magician" will be richer than we.

Maximo.—It might happen.

Don Urbano.—Fruit of his peculiar intelligence . . .

Maximo (*With modesty*).—No, of perseverance, of laborious patience . . .

Evarista.—Oh, I should say! You work brutally.

Maximo.—As is necessary, Aunt, through duty, and a little more for pleasure, for recreation, for scientific enthusiasm.

Don Urbano.—It is really a monomania, an intoxication.

Evarista (In a sermon-like tone).—Ah! No; it is ambition, the cursed ambition which upsets so many and in the end causes their ruin.

Maximo.—A very legitimate ambition, Aunt. You see that . . .

Evarista (Taking the words from his mouth).—The eagerness, the thirst for riches in order to satisfy with them the appetite for pleasure. Pleasure, pleasure, pleasure: that is what you want and for which you live in continual movement, comprising in the struggle your nature—stomach, brain, heart. You do not think of the brevity of life, nor of the vanity of desires for temporal things; you do not succeed in convincing yourself that everything will remain here.

Maximo (Gracefully; impatient to leave).—Everything will remain here, except myself, for I am going right now.

José (Announcing).—The Marquis of Ronda.

Maximo (Stopping).—Ah! Then I cannot go without greeting him.

Evarista (Gathering up the papers).—God doesn't wish us to work today.

Don Urbano.—I can guess what he is coming for.

Evarista.—Let him come in, José. (*José goes out.*)

Maximo.—He comes to invite you to the dedication of the new convent of La Esclavitud, founded by Virginia. He told me of it last night.

Evarista.—Ah! Yes . . . But is it today?

SCENE 3

EVARISTA; DON URBANO; MAXIMO; THE MARQUIS

Marquis (Bowling meekly).—Illustrious friend . . . Urbano. (*To MAXIMO.*) How are you? I did not think I should find the "Magician" here . . .

Maximo.—The "Magician" salutes you and disappears.

Marquis.—One moment, my friend. (*Detaining him.*)

Evarista.—Why, yes, Marquis, we shall go

Marquis.—You knew about it already ?

Don Urbano.—At what hour is it?

Marquis.—At five sharp. (*To MAXIMO*) I do not invite you for I know that you haven't time for social life.

Maximo.—Alas, no! I wasn't expecting you today.

Marquis.—How, since we have a religious and secular holiday? Well, tonight you shall not get rid of me.

Evarista (*Lighly mocking*).—We have been noticing—with pleasure, of course—the frequency of the visits of the Marquis to the laboratory of the great sorcerer.

Maximo.—The Marquis honors me with his friendship and with the interest he displays in my studies.

Marquis.—I have acquired a sudden passion for machinery and electrical phenomena Whims of age.

Don Urbano (*To MAXIMO*).—Well, you have a good pupil.

Evarista.—God knows (*Maliciously*.) God knows who is the pupil and who the master.

Marquis.—Apropos of the master! I am sorry that since he is present I am deprived of saying all the bad things that come to me.

Evarista.—Go along, Maximo, go along so that we may say bad things about you.

Maximo.—I am going. Let the evil tongues wag as they please. (*To the MARQUIS*.) Farewell, as always. (*To his aunt*.) Good-bye, Aunt.

Evarista.—God be with you, my son.

Marquis (*To MAXIMO, who leaves*).—Until tonight . . . if they let me. (*To EVARISTA*.) Extraordinary man! I admired him by reputation, and knowing him now and appreciating for myself his high qualities, I maintain that there is no one who can equal him.

Evarista.—In the scientific world.

Marquis.—And in all fields, madam.

Evarista.—Certainly as for intelligence

Marquis (*With enthusiasm*).—And as for heart. Well, who is there more noble, more sincere ?

Evarista (*Not wishing to continue a delicate discussion*).—Good, Marquis, good (*Changing the subject*.) So you were saying that we should be there at five?

Marquis.—Exactly. I shall count on you and Electra.

Evarista.—I don't know whether we ought to take her.

Marquis.—Oh, I was charged especially with asking the presence of the girl at this solemnity. And I put on the airs of a good diplomat, declaring that I should succeed. Virginia desires to make her acquaintance.

Don Urbano.—In that case . . .

Marquis.—Promise not to put me bad.

Evarista.—Oh, you may count on Electra.

Marquis.—There will be a good many people there.

(Rises to leave.)

Don Urbano.—It will be a brilliant affair.

Marquis.—Good-bye, then. I have to go to the Otumba's. I shall come by here . . . (Hears the voice of ELECTRA at the left, gaily chattering and laughing. The MARQUIS stops on hearing her.)

SCENE 4

THE SAME; ELECTRA

Electra (Within).—Ha, ha . . . darling, another kiss . . . silly, silly, both of us; but we understand each other. (Appears at the left with a large, handsome doll, which she kisses and rocks in her arms. Stops as if ashamed.)

Evarista.—Child, what are you doing?

Marquis.—Don't scold her.

Electra.—Mademoiselle Lulu and I were passing the time telling stories.

Don Urbano.—She talks nonsense today.

Electra (Going away, talking secretly to the doll. The rest watch her).—Lulu, how pretty you are! But he is nicer. How happy will my love be with you, and I with both of you!

Marquis.—She continues to be so playful, so . . .

Evarista.—Since yesterday we have noticed in her a sadness which troubles me.

Marquis.—Sadness—idealism . . .

Evarista.—And now you see . . .

Marquis (Affectionately, going to her).—Electra, my dear child . . .

Electra (Putting the doll's face to that of the MARQUIS).—Come, Mademoiselle, don't be bashful, give the Marquis a

kiss. (*Before the MARQUIS can kiss the doll, ELECTRA gives him a light rap with the doll's head.*)

Marquis.—Ah! Rogue! You hit me. (*Stroking ELECTRA's chin.*) Lulu will not be angry if I say that I like her big friend better.

Evarista.—Both have the same amount of brains.

Don Urbano.—And what were you talking about to your doll?

Electra.—Sometimes I tell her my troubles.

Evarista.—You, troubles!

Electra.—Yes, I, troubles. And when you see us so silent, we are thinking of past things . . .

Marquis.—The past interests you. Sign of reflection.

Evarista.—What are you saying? Past things?

Electra.—Of the time when I was born. (*With gravity.*) The day in which I came into the world was a very sad day. Wasn't it? Some of you remember?

Evarista.—Why how absurdly you talk, my daughter! Aren't you ashamed for the Marquis to see you so silly?

Electra.—Do you not believe that the fools the most foolish and the children the most childish do their simple acts with some reason?

Marquis.—Very true.

Evarista.—And what sense is there in this play so unsuited to your age?

Electra (*Looking at the MARQUIS who is smiling.*)—I can't tell you now.

Marquis.—That means that I should go.

Evarista.—Child!

Marquis.—Yes, I am going. I am sorry that my affairs do not allow me time to enjoy the graces of this child. Good-bye, Electra, I shall return at five to take you with me.

Electra.—Me!

Don Urbano.—Yes, daughter, we are going to the dedication of *Las Esclavas*.

Electra.—I, too?

Evarista.—Now you may go and get ready.

Electra.—Will there be many people. (*Frightened.*) Oh, a lot of people make me afraid. I like solitude.

Marquis.—Why, we shall be just like a family . . . ! Well, I must not stay longer.

Evarista.—Good-bye, Marquis.

Marquis (To ELECTRA).—At five, child, and we must learn to be punctual. (Exit at the rear with DON URBANO.)

SCENE 5

EVARISTA; ELECTRA

Evarista.—Explain to me now why you are so silly and playful.

Electra.—You see, Aunt, I had a doubt, what shall I say? —a problem.

Evarista.—You, problems!

Electra.—Yes, in the plural: problems . . . for it is not one alone.

Evarista.—God help you.

Electra.—And I was trying to have someone solve them with a few words . . .

Evarista.—Who?

Electra (Sighing).—A person who is no longer in this world.

Evarista.—Child!

Electra.—My mother . . . Don't be astonished . . . My mother can tell me . . . and counsel me . . . Don't you believe that people who are in the other world can come to ours? (Gesture of incredulity on the part of EVARISTA.) You don't believe it? I do. I believe it because I have seen it. I have seen my mother.

Evarista.—Virgin of Carmen! How bad your poor head is!

Electra.—When I was a little girl so big . . .

Evarista.—In the Ursuline convent at Bayonne?

Electra.—Yes . . . my mother used to appear to me.

Evarista.—In dreams, of course.

Electra.—No, no; when I was as awake as I am now. (Leaves the doll on a chair.)

Evarista.—Electra, take care what you are saying . . .

Electra.—When I was sad, alone and sick, when someone hurt me making me understand my unfortunate situation in the world, my mother used to come to console me. At first I saw her vaguely, fading away, confusing herself with objects near by and far away. She advanced like a light

. . . trembling . . . so . . . then she didn't tremble, Aunt . . . she was a still form, still, a sad image, it was my mother, I could not doubt it. In the beginning I saw her dressed as a great lady, very elegantly. Then one day I saw her in a nun's garb. Her face in a white hood, her body clothed with the black serge; she had a majesty, a beauty that one cannot imagine who has not seen her . . .

Evarista.—Poor girl, don't get delirious!

Electra.—When she got near me she would reach out her arms as if she would embrace me. She spoke to me in a voice, very sweet, very distant, soft . . . I don't know how to explain it. I asked her questions and she used to answer me. (*Greater incredulity on the part of EVARISTA.*) But you don't believe it?

Evarista.—Go on, daughter, go on.

Electra.—In the Ursuline convent I had a lovely doll that I called Lulu, too; and see how strange, Aunt. Whenever I went through the garden, late in the afternoon, alone, with the doll in my arms, both of us melancholy, looking at the sky, the vision of my mother was sure, it never failed . . . at first among the trees, like a figure formed by groups of leaves, then . . . revealing itself clearly and advancing towards me between the dark trunks . . .

Evarista.—And later, when you were older, when you lived in Hendaye . . . did she come too?

Electra.—In the first years, not afterwards. I used to play then with live dolls—the little ones of my cousin Rosaura, a boy and a girl, who were always with me. They adored me and I them. At night in the solitude of my room, the children asleep, they there . . . I here. (*Indicating the place of the two beds.*) My mother used to pass between the two beds, and approaching me . . .

Evarista.—Oh, don't go on, for Heaven's sake! You make me afraid . . . But these visions, did they stop when you got older?

Electra.—When I quit having dolls and children at my side. That is why I want to become a child again, and I try to go back to the age of innocence, with the hope that, being what I was then, my mother will come to me again and will answer all that I should like to ask her . . . and may give me counsel . . .

Evarista.—And what doubts have you to . . . ?

Electra (*Looking at the floor*).—Doubts . . . things that I don't know and should like to know . . .

Evarista.—What nonsense! And what is this thing so serious about which you need counsel and advice . . . ?

Electra.—Oh! A thing . . . (*Hesitates, is almost on the point of telling.*)

Evarista.—What? Tell me.

Electra.—A thing . . . (*With child-like timidity, handling the doll, and without daring to declare her secret.*) a thing . . .

Evarista (*Severe, but affectionately*).—Oh, such childishness is intolerable. (*Takes the doll away from her.*) Alas, Electra, foolish child, you are a model of intelligence and grace, when you are not the image of selfishness—angels and demons are struggling for your heart. We must intervene, my daughter, we must mediate in this struggle, driving away the demons so that they may not fall upon you and cause you sorrow . . . (*Kisses her.*) Come, be serious. You need to occupy yourself with something, to distract your imagination . . . Don't forget that at five . . . Go and get ready now . . .

Electra.—Yes, Aunt.

Evarista.—You have plenty of time: three-quarters of an hour.

Electra.—I shall be ready.

Evarista.—And no jests, Electra . . . Be careful! . . . (*Exit at the left, with the doll in her arms, dangling it.*)

SCENE 6

ELECTRA; PATROS

Electra (*Looking after the doll*).—Poor Lulu, how she dangles! (*Imitating the position of the doll and feeling the sore shoulder.*) Oh, how it hurts! (*Sits down, thinking.*) And he waiting for me . . . ! How sad it was to leave him! How he cried and threw out his arms to me . . . I promised to return.

Patros (*Appearing cautiously at the door*).—Miss Electra . . .

Electra.—Come in.

Patros (Advancing with caution).—Is there anyone here?

Electra.—We are alone.

Patros.—There is no opportunity like this, Miss Electra.
Now or never.

Electra.—Have you come from there?

Patros.—Yes, from there . . . Many gentlemen who
were talking numbers . . . millions and more millions
. . . Inside, nobody.

Electra (Hesitating).—Dare we?

Patros.—There is no danger.

Electra.—Virgin of Carmen protect me! (*Turning to
the garden entrance.* ELECTRA stops, frightened.) Wait.
Wouldn't it be better for us to go out on the other side?
Perhaps my aunt might be at the dining room window.

Patros.—She might be. Let's go around this way. (*To
the left.*)

Electra.—This way. Courage and valor, with caution.
(*Exit both running, at the left.*)

SCENE 7

DON URBANO; JOSÉ (*who enters at the back just as the
girls leave*)

Don Urbano.—Who went out there?

José.—It was Patros, sir.

Don Urbano.—So . . . How many?

José.—There are five now who are making love to the
young lady; five that I have seen. God knows how many
more there are.

Don Urbano.—And what is to be done? Do they walk
around the house?

José.—Two in the morning, two in the afternoon, and the
young fellow at night.

Don Urbano.—Have you noticed whether there is any
communication between the window of Electra's room and
the street, by means of a basket or a telephone cord?

José.—No, I haven't seen anything of the kind. But I
think it would be well to put the young lady in an inside
room. (*To the left.*)

Don Urbano.—And do some of these fellows come into the garden secretly?

José.—I would give them a good drubbing!

Don Urbano.—All right. Keep on watching. (*Enter CUESTA at the rear.*)

SCENE 8

DON URBANO; CUESTA, (*with papers and letters*)

Don Urbano.—Leonardo, thank God!

Cuesta.—I told you I couldn't come in the morning. (*To JOSÉ, giving him a letter.*) Have this registered . . . Quickly. Then you will bring me some more letters. (*Exit JOSÉ.*)

Don Urbano (*Taking a paper that CUESTA gives him.*).—What is this?

Cuesta.—The receipt for the hundred thousand odd . . . Sign now a receipt for sixty-seven thousand . . .

Don Urbano.—All right; to send to Rome.

Cuesta.—And Evarista?

Don Urbano.—Dressing.

Cuesta.—I know already that you are going to the dedication of La Esclavitud, and that you are going to take Electra.

Don Urbano.—It is certain that we can expect nothing good of this girl. Every day she shows more extravagances, new frivolities . . .

Cuesta (*With vivacity*).—Which indicate nothing bad.

Don Urbano.—They are like symptoms, you see, like symptoms. On this account, Evarista, who is foresight itself, has thought of submitting her to the healthful regime of San José de la Penitencia.

Cuesta.—Allow me, my dear Urbano, to dissent from your opinions. You will say that I should not meddle . . .

Don Urbano.—On the contrary . . . As a good friend of the family, you may give us your opinion, advise us . . .

Cuesta.—This dragging into the convent life young girls who have not shown a decided vocation, is very serious . . . And you must not think it strange if some oppose . . .

Don Urbano.—Who?

Cuesta.—How should I know? Some one. There is in the life of this girl an unknown factor . . . Some fine day . . . it may happen . . . I cannot be sure what will happen . . . some fine day when you pull the string to shut the girl up against her will, a voice may say: “Stop sir, stop madam, stop.”

Don Urbano.—And we shall reply: “Very well, Sir Unknown Factor . . . Here you have her. Relieve us from a troublesome and vexing guardianship.”

Cuesta (*Feeling great fatigue, sits down.*)—This is just a supposition, Urbano, a conjecture.

Don Urbano.—Are you ill? Do you need anything?

Cuesta—No . . . This heart of mine is not as strong as my will.

Don Urbano.—Rest, man. Why do you not lie down a while?

Cuesta.—Why, don’t you know how much I have to do? (*Taking out some papers.*) Right away, two very urgent letters that must get off today.

Don Urbano.—Write them here. (*Fixing a place at the table and taking away some books and papers.*)

Cuesta.—All right . . . I’ll install myself here.

Don Urbano.—I, too, am very much behind. I have a thousand little things . . .

Cuesta.—Don’t bother about me. (*Writing.*)

Don Urbano.—Excuse me, Leonardo. Evarista will be out before long.

Cuesta (*Without looking at him.*)—Good-bye. (*Exit DON URBANO at back.*)

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SCENE 9

CUESTA; ELECTRA; PATROS, (*who appear at the left door, as if reconnoitering.*)

Electra.—Be careful, Patros . . . It will be hard to get him through here.

Patros (*Recognizing CUESTA, whose back she sees, writing.*)—Don Leonardo!

Electra.—Hush! . . . The best way is to leave him

in your room until tonight. Well, I have to go to this cursed dedication!

Cuesta (Hearing voices, turns around).—Ah! Electra

Electra.—Do we bother you, Don Leonardo? . . .

Cuesta.—No, my daughter. Will you do me the favor to wait a moment . . . until I finish this letter. I want to talk with you . . .

Electra.—I shall be here, sir. (Aside to PATROS.) What a nuisance! (Aloud.) We only came to look for a paper and pencil so that Patros could note down . . . (Takes a paper and pencil from the table. Aside to PATROS.) Take good care of him for me, do. Oh, how pretty he was sleeping! The little mouth, and those dirty hands and such black finger nails, as if he had been scratching in the ground . . . ! Oh, I could eat him up!

Patros.—And his curly hair and his little feet . . . !

Electra (With an effusion of affection).—I shall go crazy. Take good care of him, Patros, watch that . . .

Patros.—I am taking him two little rolls now.

Electra.—No, no; they will hurt his stomach. Take him some soup . . .

Patros.—And how shall I get it?

Electra.—That's true. Ah! Ask for a cup of milk for me.

Patros.—That's it. And I shall give it to him as soon as he wakes up.

Electra.—Here are the paper and pencil for your scribbling. That is what amuses you most. . . . Then tonight, watching an opportunity, we shall take him to my room and he shall sleep with me.

Cuesta (Finishing the letter).—Now it is finished.

Electra.—Excuse me a moment, Don Leonardo. (Aside to PATROS.) Don't leave him . . . Be careful. If Don Leonardo doesn't keep me long, before I dress I shall come and give him a kiss.

Cuesta.—Patros . . .

Patros.—Sir . . .

Cuesta.—Will you take this letter to the post office?

Patros.—Right away. (Exit.)

SCENE IO

CUESTA; ELECTRA

Cuesta (Seizing her hands).—Playful little woman. Come here. What a pleasure to see you!

Electra.—Do you like me very much, Don Leonardo? If you only knew how it pleases me for people to like me!

Cuesta.—The most important thing, my daughter, is for you to be serious . . . that God-fearing people should find nothing to censure. . . . They have told me . . . I believe they have exaggerated . . . that lovers are swarming around you . . .

Electra.—Alas, yes! I can scarcely count them. But there is only one of them that I like.

Cuesta.—Only one! And that is . . . ?

Electra.—Oh! Wouldn't you like to know?

Cuesta.—Do I know him?

Electra.—I should say you do!

Cuesta.—Has he declared himself in a formal manner?

Electra.—Why he hasn't declared himself at all! He hasn't said anything to me . . . yet.

Cuesta.—The fellow is timid. And you call him a lover?

Electra.—I shouldn't give him that name.

Cuesta.—And you love him, and you know or suspect that he loves you?

Electra.—That's it . . . I suspect it . . . I am not sure of it.

Cuesta.—And you will not tell me . . . me, who . . . ?

Electra.—Oh, no!

Cuesta.—Oh, do have confidence in me.

Electra.—I cannot now, I must go and dress.

Cuesta.—All right; we shall talk about it later.

Electra (Timidly, looking towards the back).—Is my aunt coming?

Cuesta.—Go and dress . . . and tomorrow . . .

Electra.—Yes, tomorrow. Good-bye. (*Runs off to the right. Moved by a sudden idea, turns half around.*) First I have to . . . (*Aside.*) I cannot conquer the temptation. I want to give him another kiss. (*Goes running to the left. CUESTA follows her with his eyes. Sighs.*)

SCENE II

CUESTA; DON URBANO; EVARISTA; (*afterwards ELECTRA*)

Cuesta (Gathering up his papers).—What happiness would be mine if I could love her openly!

Evarista (Dressed for the street).—Pardon the delay, Don Leonardo. My husband has told me that we are arranging an extensive transaction.

Don Urbano (Giving CUESTA a receipt).—Here.

Evarista.—I shall not be astonished to see you come in with another load of money . . . God sends it . . . God receives it . . . (*ELECTRA appears at the door on the left. On seeing her aunt, she hesitates and does not dare to enter. Finally she tries to escape, but EVARISTA sees her and stops her.*) Oh, you scamp! Why are you not dressed? Where have you been?

Electra.—In the ironing room. I went to have Patros iron me a jabot.

Evarista.—And you are so calm about it! (*Noticing that there is a letter in one of ELECTRA's pockets.*) What have you here? (*Takes it.*)

Electra.—A letter.

Cuesta.—Affairs of youth!

Evarista.—You can't imagine, my friend Cuesta, how this child worries me with her childishness, which is not so innocent either. (*Gives the letter to her husband.*) You read it.

Cuesta.—Let's see.

Don Urbano (Reads).—“My dear young lady: It seems to me that in your bewitching face . . .”

Evarista (Mocking).—How pretty! (*ELECTRA restrains her laughter with difficulty.*)

Don Urbano.—“That in your bewitching face the Supreme Creator has written the problem of the . . . of the . . .” (*Without understanding the following word.*)

Electra (Prompting).—“Of the Cosmos.”

Don Urbano.—That's it: “Of the Cosmos, symbolizing in your luminous glances, in your divine mouth, the powerful physical agent that . . .”

Evarista (Snatching the letter).—What unseemly nonsense!

Don Urbano (Discovering another letter in the other pocket).
Why here is another! (Takes it.)

Cuesta.—Let's see, let's see this one.

Evarista.—My daughter, you are a real letter-box.

Cuesta (Reading).—“Heartless Electra: With what words shall I express my despair, my madness, my frenzy . . . ?”

Evarista.—Enough . . . This is certainly not innocent. (Troubled, examining the letters.) I will wager there are more.

Cuesta.—Evarista, indulgence.

Electra.—Aunt, don't be angry.

Evarista.—Not be angry! I will settle it with you. Now go and dress.

Don Urbano (Looking at his watch).—It is almost time.

Electra.—I shall be here in a minute . . .

Evarista.—Go along, go along. (Glad to see herself free, ELECTRA runs to her room.)

SCENE 12

CUESTA; DON URBANO; EVARISTA; PANTOJA

Evarista (With sadness and dismay).—Now you see, Don Leonardo . . .

Cuesta.—The tranquility with which she allowed her secrets to be exposed shows that there is in all this little or no evil intent.

Evarista.—Alas! I do not think the same way, no, no

Pantoja (At the back, somewhat out of breath).—Here they are . . . and Cuesta too, just so one cannot talk freely

Evarista (Pleased to see him).—At last you come . . . (They form two groups: at the left CUESTA seated, DON URBANO standing; at the right, PANTOJA and EVARISTA seated.)

Pantoja.—I have come to tell you of very serious things.

Evarista (Frightened).—Oh, dear! God's will be done!

Pantoja (Repeating the phrase with reservations).—God's will be done! . . . yes . . . But let our will be the same as God's and let us use our will to bring about good,

cost what it may . . .

Evarista.—Your strength fortifies my soul . . . Well . . . and what?

Pantoja.—Today at the Requesens' they talked about the girl in the most shameful terms. They said that pursued most indecorously by a whole crowd of lovers, she delights in receiving and sending letters at all hours of the day.

Evarista.—Unfortunately, Salvador, the frivolities of the girl are such that although I love her so much I cannot come to her defense.

Pantoja (Anxiously).—Well, listen further and you will see that human malice has no limits. Last night the Marquis of Ronda, in a company at his house, before Virginia, his saintly wife, and other persons of great respectability, did not cease to praise the charms of Electra in a very worldly and repugnant manner.

Evarista.—Let us have patience, my friend . . .

Pantoja.—Patience . . . yes, patience, a virtue which is worth very little if it is not inspired by resolution. Let us determine, my dear friend, to put Electra where she will not see examples of levity, not hear any word spoken with malicious accent.

Evarista.—Where she will breathe an atmosphere of austere virtue . . .

Pantoja.—Where the buzz of the poisonous and immodest suitors will not disturb her . . . In the critical age of the formation of character, we ought to preserve her from the great danger, madam, from the terrible danger . . .

Evarista.—Which is?

Pantoja.—Man. There is no greater evil than man, man . . . when he is not good. I know it from myself. I have been my own master. My wildness which I cured by the grace of God, and afterwards my sorrowful convalescence, taught me the medicine for souls . . . Leave it to me . . . I will save the girl . . . (*DON URBANO interrupts him, passing to the group on the right.*)

Don Urbano (Giving meaning to his words).—Do you know what Cuesta tells me? Well, that among this multitude of lovers there is one preferred. Electra herself confessed it.

Evarista.—And who is it? (*Passes from the right to the left of the stage. PANTOJA and URBANO remaining at the right.*)

Don Urbano (To PANTOJA).—This might change the terms

of the problem.

Pantoja (With ill humor).—But what does this preference signify? Is it a pure affection, or an immoderate, feverish passion, one of those that are the gravest symptoms of the madness of the age? (*Very excited, raising his tone.*) For it must be known, Urbano, it must be known.

Don Urbano.—We shall know it . . .

Pantoja (Passing to the side of CUESTA).—And you, Friend Cuesta, didn't you question her? . . .

Evarista (In the center to DON URBANO).—Try to find out

Cuesta (Somewhat vexed already, talking to PANTOJA).—It seems to me that you display an undue zeal and not at all to be desired.

Pantoja (With a suavity that does not hide his haughtiness).—My zeal, my dear Leonardo, is what it should be.

Cuesta (A little hurt).—I, as a friend of the family, believed . . .

Pantoja (Taking DON URBANO aside to the right).—Cuesta mixes too much in things that do not concern him . . .

Cuesta (To EVARISTA, without heeding whether PANTOJA hears him).—Our good Pantoja interferes too much in other people's business.

Evarista (Without knowing what explanation to give him).—It is that . . . as our very old and loyal friend . . .

Cuesta.—So am I.

Don Urbano (Looking towards the back of stage).—Here is the Marquis now.

SCENE 13

THE SAME; THE MARQUIS

Marquis.—Good greetings to you all!

Pantoja (Aside).—Bad enough since he comes!

Marquis (After bowing to EVARISTA).—And Electra?

Evarista.—She will be here in a moment.

Marquis (Bowing to all).—We haven't much time left.

Don Urbano.—It is time now (*PANTOJA, impatient, waits for ELECTRA at the door of her room. CUESTA is talking with DON URBANO.*)

SCENE 14

THE SAME; ELECTRA

Pantoja (*With joy, announcing her*).—Here she is. (ELECTRA enters at the right, dressed with most elegant simplicity and distinction.)

Marquis (*Joyful and eulogistic*).—Oh, how elegant!

Electra (*Pleased, turning around so that they can see her from all sides*).—Gentlemen, how do you like it?

Cuesta.—Divine!

Marquis.—Ideal!

Evarista.—Very good, my daughter

Pantoja (*Displeased at the eulogies of ELECTRA*).—Are we going? (They start to go.)

SCENE 15

THE SAME; BALBINA, (*who interrupts brusquely the scene, entering at the left, hurried and out of breath*)

Balbina.—Madam, madam! (General alarm.)

All (Except ELECTRA).—What is it?

Balbina.—Oh, what has the young lady done?

Electra (*Aside, stamping her foot*).—They have discovered me.

Balbina.—Heavens, heavens! What pranks she does think of . . . ! (Laughing.) A fine . . . ! In the name of the Father

Evarista (*Impatiently*).—Tell it

Electra.—I will confess if you will let me. It was that

Balbina.—She went to the house of Don Maximo, and she stole . . . for it was like a robbery . . . a very funny one, surely.

Don Urbano.—But what . . . ?

Balbina.—The little boy. (All looking at ELECTRA, who soon recovers from her fright and adopts a calm and grave attitude.)

Evarista.—But, my daughter . . . !

Pantoja.—Child, child!

Balbina.—He was sound asleep in the house. They entered on tiptoe, the young lady and that crazy Patros . . . they carried him away and brought him here.

Evarista.—It is ridiculous.

Pantoja (Hiding his irritation).—And moreover, very unbecoming.

Electra (Effusively).—Aunt, I love him so much . . . ! And he does me!

Marquis (With enthusiasm).—What a girl!

Cuesta.—She deserves indulgence.

Evarista.—Maximo will be furious . . .

Balbina.—José ran to tell him . . . We shall know soon . . .

Don Urbano.—And where is the little fellow?

Balbina.—The young lady hid him in Patros' room with the idea of carrying him to her room tonight and keeping him there with her. (*Laughter of the gentlemen, except PANTOJA, who frowns.*) The child woke up a while ago and Patros gave him a bun to entertain him . . . I heard him and I hurried there to find out. Holy Virgin! I wanted to take him and he wouldn't let me . . . I shall have to whip him

Electra (Running to the left, with instinctive impulse).—My darling!

Pantoja (Wishes to stop her).—No!

Evarista (Seizes her by the arm).—Wait.

Balbina (From the door on the left).—You can hear him crying from here.

Electra.—My poor little fellow!

Evarista.—Have him taken home.

Electra.—Nobody shall touch him . . . He is mine. (*She breaks loose forcibly from EVARISTA and PANTOJA, who try to stop her, and runs quickly out at the left.*)

SCENE 16

THE SAME; José

Pantoja (Angry, withdrawing to the right).—What a lack of sense, of dignity!

José (Hurriedly, from the garden).—Madam . . .

Evarista.—What did Maximo say?

José.—He didn't know anything about it. He was with some gentlemen . . . When I told him he began to laugh . . . But so tranquilly . . . He says that the young lady will take care of the baby.

Don Urbano.—Calmness, indeed!

Evarista (To José).—Go take him home. That's the way to teach this silly girl . . .

Marquis.—I should say let her enjoy a plaything so harmless.

SCENE 17

THE SAME; ELECTRA (*at the left, with the child in her arms. The child is about two years old.*)

Electra.—My darling boy!

Evarista.—Child, for Heaven's sake, put him down and let's go.

Don Urbano (In a hurry).—We shall be late . . .

Cuesta (To the MARQUIS).—It is a trait of motherhood. I applaud it.

Marquis.—And I think it is divine.

Evarista (Wishing to take the child from her).—Come, girl.

Electra (With a light step gets away from them. The child clings to her neck).—No, I can't leave him now, no, no.

Evarista.—Take him, Balbina.

Electra.—No, I say, no. (*Goes from one side to the other, seeking refuge.*)

Don Urbano.—Give him to me.

Electra.—No.

Pantoja (Commandingly to José).—You, take him.

Electra.—No . . . He is mine.

Evarista.—But, child, we have to go . . . !

Electra.—Go on then. (*Her hat bothers her, for it hides the child's forehead. With a quick movement she takes it off and throws it down. She continues walking with the child, fleeing from those who try to take it.*)

Evarista.—Enough. Are you coming or not?

Electra (Paying no attention, talking to the child, who throws his arms around her neck and kisses her).—Go to sleep, my

dear. Don't be afraid, little one . . . I'll not let you go.

Evarista.—Well, are we going or not?

Electra.—I am not going . . . Are you hungry, sweetheart? Are you thirsty? See how the little fellow clings to me, begging me not to leave him. Selfish people! Don't you know that he hasn't any mother?

Pantoja.—But he has someone to take care of him . . .

Evarista (Commanding the servants).—Oh, that's enough. Take him home at once.

Electra (Resolutely, without letting them take the child).—Home! Home! (With a decided step and looking at no one, she runs towards the garden and goes out. All look at her not daring to follow.)

Pantoja.—What a scandal!

Evarista.—What a lack of sense!

Marquis (Aside).—She has plenty of sense. She has found her way.

ACT III

Laboratory of MAXIMO. In the background, occupying a large part of the wall, a partition the lower portion of which is of wood, the upper portion of glass, which separates the stage from a large room in which there are various pieces of apparatus for producing electrical energy. The door in this partition communicates with the street.

At the right in front a passageway which communicates with the garden of GARCÍA YUSTE. Farther back, a door leading to the private apartments of MAXIMO and to the kitchen. Between the door and the passageway, a bookcase. At the left, a door leading to the room where the assistants are working. Beside this door, a case filled with physical apparatus and objects for scientific use.

At the back, on both sides of the partition, and in the wooden base, shelves with flasks of various substances, and books. In the angle at the right, a small sideboard.

At the left of the stage, the laboratory table containing objects indicated in the dialogue. Forming an angle with it the balances on a concrete base. In the center, a small dining table. Four chairs.

SCENE I

MAXIMO, working on a problem, very intent on his task; ELECTRA, standing arranging the many objects that are on the table—books, scale pans, test tubes, etc. Dressed with domestic simplicity and wearing a white apron.

Maximo.—To me, Electra, the double story which you have told me, this supposed authority of two gentlemen, is a fact that lacks any positive value. (*Without raising his eyes from the paper.*)

Electra (Sighing).—God grant that it be so!

Maximo.—All reduces itself to two platonic paternities with no legal effect . . . so far . . . The worst is the authority which Pantoja wishes to assume . . .

Electra.—An authority that overwhelms me, that gives me no rest. I beg you let us not talk of this matter. It spoils for me the joy I feel being here in your house.

Maximo.—Really?

Electra.—Yes. And more; I get my head and my nerves in such a strange state that . . . I have already told you that on certain occasions of my life there takes possession of me an intense desire to see my mother as I used to see her in my childhood . . . Well, when this tyranny of Pantoja increases, this desire fills my whole soul and with it I feel a nervous and mental disturbance that announces to me . . .

Maximo.—The vision of your mother? Child, this is not proper for a strong mind. Learn to control your imagination . . . So, to work. Idleness is the first disturber of our minds.

Electra (With much animation).—I am doing what you told me. (*Takes some flasks of mineral substances and carries them to one of the cases.*) This in its place. So I do not think of the fury of my aunt when she knows . . .

Maximo (Buried in his work).—She will be pleased! As if the folly of yesterday were not enough, when you carried off the child and bringing him back stayed longer than usual, today, to make amends you have come to my house, and here you are so cool. Thank God for the absence of our uncle and aunt. Both of them invited by the Requesens' for the distribution of prizes and to lunch at Santa Clara.

They don't know the jump the doll of their house has made over to mine.

Electra.—You advised me to become insubordinate.

Maximo.—Of course; I have been the instigator of your transgression and I am not sorry for it.

Electra.—My conscience tells me that there is nothing wrong in it.

Maximo.—You are in the house and in the company of an honorable man.

Electra (*Talking without stopping her work*).—Of course, and furthermore, you being busy with your work, alone, without a servant, and I having nothing to do, it is very natural that . . .

Maximo.—That you should come to take care of me and of my children . . . If that is not logic, we may say that logic has disappeared from the world.

Electra.—Poor little ones! Everybody knows that I adore them. They are my passion, my weakness . . . (*MAXIMO, absorbed in a calculation, does not heed what she says.*) And it even seems to me . . . (*She approaches the table, carrying some books that were out of place.*)

Maximo (*Arousing from his absorption*).—What?

Electra.—That their mother did not love them more than I do.

Maximo (*Satisfied with the result of his calculation, reads aloud a sum*).—Zero, three hundred ten and eight . . . Do me the favor to bring me the table of resistances . . . that red book . . .

Electra (*Going to the case on the right*).—This one?

Maximo.—Higher up.

Electra.—Yes, yes . . . How stupid! (*Getting the book, gives it to him.*)

Maximo.—It is wonderful that in so short a time you know my books and their places.

Electra.—Don't you think I have arranged them very well?

Maximo.—Thank God, I see in my study cleanliness and order!

Electra (*Well satisfied*).—Is it true, Maximo, that I am not absolutely, absolutely useless?

Maximo (*Looking at her fixedly*).—Nothing exists in creation that does not serve for something. Who told you

that God did not create you for great ends? Who told you that you are not . . . ?

Electra (Anxiously).—What?

Maximo.—A great soul, beautiful and noble, still somewhat smothered . . . between the tow and the sawdust of a doll?

Electra (Very happy).—Oh, if I only were all that . . ! (*MAXIMO rises, takes some bars of metal from the case at the left and examines them.*) Don't tell me so, for I shall be crazy with joy . . . May I sing now?

Maximo.—Yes, child, yes. (*Humming, ELECTRA repeats over the andante of a sonata.*) Good music is like the spur of lazy ideas that do not flow easily; it is also like a hook that draws out those that cleave to the depths of the imagination . . . Sing, girl, sing. (*Continues to be absorbed in his work.*)

Electra (At the case in the rear).—I am going to arrange all this. The metaloids go on this side. I know them very well by the color of the labels . . . How the work entertains me! I could stay here the whole day long . . .

Maximo (Gaily).—Well, comrade!

Electra (Going to his side).—What has the "Wonderful Magician" to command?

Maximo.—I do not command yet, I ask. (*Takes a flask which contains metal filings or shavings.*) Since the playful Electra wishes to work with me, will she do me the favor to weigh thirty grams of this metal.

Electra.—Oh, yes! . . .

Maximo.—Yesterday you learned to weigh with the balances.

Electra (Pleased, getting ready).—Yes, yes . . . give it to me, let me do it. (*Pouring out the metal on the pan she admires its beauty.*) How pretty! What is this?

Maximo.—Aluminum. It is like you. It weighs little

Electra.—I weigh little?

Maximo.—But it is very firm. (*Looking at her face.*) Are you very firm?

Electra.—In some things that I keep to myself I am very firm even to severity and I believe, if occasion arose, I should be so even to martyrdom. (*Continues weighing without interrupting the work.*)

Maximo.—What things are those?

Electra.—It is no matter to you.

Maximo (Absorbed in his work).—All right . . . Now weigh me seventy grams of this. (*Giving her another flask.*)

Electra.—You are like copper . . . No, no, for it is very ugly.

Maximo.—But very useful.

Electra.—No, no. I should compare you to gold, which is the most valuable of all.

Maximo.—Come, come, let's not play. You corrupt me, Electra, you demoralize me . . .

Electra.—Let me amuse myself with the qualities of this pretty metal which is like me. I am firm! . . . unbendable . . . Well, you may say so to Evarista and Urbano, for in the sermon that they will give me today they will tell me forty times over that I am very . . . fragile . . . fragile, boy!

Maximo.—They don't know what they say.

Electra.—Of course not. How should they know . . . !

Maximo.—Be careful, Electra, with your talking don't make a mistake in the weight.

Electra.—I make a mistake! How stupid! I am very careful, more so than you think.

Maximo.—Of course, I see you are. (*Turns to one of the cases looking for a crucible.*) Well, your aunt will be really angry, and it will take a lot of work to convince her of your innocence.

Electra.—God, who sees the heart, knows that there is no harm in this. Why shouldn't they let me stay here all day and take care of you and help you . . . ?

Maximo (Coming back with the crucible).—Because you are a young lady, and young ladies cannot remain alone in a man's house, however honorable and respectable he may be.

Electra.—Well, we are very happy, we poor young ladies. (*The work finished, she gives him the portions of the metal in porcelain pans.*) Here, here it is.

Maximo (Takes the pans).—How fine! What skill, what clean hands! . . . What steadiness, girl, and what care not to mix up the work! You are very careful!

Electra.—And especially, satisfied. When one is happy everything is well done.

Maximo.—That's true, very true. (*Pours the two metals into the crucible.*)

Electra.—That is a crucible?

Maximo.—Yes, to fuse the two metals.

Electra.—We are being fused, we are . . . We are struggling in the midst of fire, and . . . (*Hums the sonata.*)

Maximo.—Do me the favor to call Mariano.

Electra (*Going to the door at the left.*)—Mariano!

Maximo.—Have Gil come, too.

Electra.—Gil . . . quickly . . . The master calls you. (*Hurrying them.*) Come on . . .

SCENE 2

ELECTRA; MAXIMO; MARIANO; GIL (*the first dressed as a workman, in a blouse; the second in ordinary dress, with sleeve-protectors and a pen behind his ear.*)

Gil (*Showing a calculation.*)—This is the value obtained.

Maximo (*Reads rapidly the sum.*)—0, 158, 073 . . . It is wrong. (*Sure of what he is saying, with severity.*) It is not possible that for a cable diameter of less than four millimeters we should obtain a greater circuit, according to your calculation. The true distance is less than two hundred kilometers.

Gil—Why, I don't know . . . Sir, I . . . (*Confused*).

Maximo.—It is bad. Doubtless your attention was distracted.

Electra.—You don't pay proper attention . . . - careful attention . . .

Maximo.—While you are making the calculations, you are not paying attention to what you are doing.

Electra (*Scolding him.*)—And talking about bull-fights, theaters, and a thousand foolish things. That's the way it comes.

Gil—I will rectify the work.

Electra.—And especially much patience, using all your senses . . . that's the only way we shall make progress!

Gil—I am going . . .

Electra.—Quickly . . . Don't be careless . . .
Exit Gil.)

Maximo (*To MARIANO, giving him the mixed metals*).—Here you are.

Mariano.—For fusing . . .

Maximo.—Have you prepared the furnaces?

Mariano.—Yes, sir.

Maximo.—Put them in at once and when they are at the point of fusing, tell me. With this alloy we shall make a new test of conductivity . . . I hope to reach two hundred kilometers with very little loss.

Mariano.—Shall we make the test this afternoon?

Maximo (*Troubled by a fixed idea*).—Yes . . . I shall not give up this problem. (*To ELECTRA.*) It is my fixed idea, which will not let me rest.

Electra.—I have a fixed idea, too, and for that I live. On with it!

Maximo (*To ELECTRA*).—On with it! (*To MARIANO.*) Always forward.

Mariano.—Have you further orders?

Maximo.—That you hurry the fusion.

Electra.—That you hurry the fusion, Mariano . . . let the metals be well fused.

Mariano.—Both together, Mademoiselle. (*Exit MARIANO.*)

Electra.—Both together.

Maximo (*As if preparing another operation*).—Now, my gracious pupil . . .

Electra.—Pardon me, Sir Magician, I must see if the children are awake.

Maximo.—That's true. How long is it since they ate?

Electra.—Three-quarters of an hour. They ought to sleep a half-hour more. Is that all right?

Maximo.—Yes, anything you arrange is all right.

Electra.—Be careful what you are saying . . .

Maximo.—I am.

Electra.—That everything I arrange is all right?

Maximo (*Looking at her affectionately*).—Everything, everything . . .

Electra.—May it be so . . . Well, I am going and I'll be back in a hurry. (*With great agility, singing, exit by the door on the right, towards the interior of the house.* As she leaves the workman enters at the rear.)

SCENE 3

MAXIMO; THE WORKMAN

Maximo.—What is it?

Workman.—Sir, today that gentleman came again
the Marquis of Ronda.

Maximo.—And why didn't he come in?

Workman.—He asked if he could see you . . . I
told him that you had a visitor . . . And he, like one
of the family, without malice, said: "I know . . . Miss
Electra. I think I'll not go in now . . ." And he left.

Maximo (Quickly).—I am sorry. Why didn't you an-
nounce him? How silly!

Workman.—He said he would come back.

Maximo.—Well, if he comes back, let him come in, even
if Miss Electra is here, and especially if she is here.

Workman.—All right, sir. (*Exit at rear.*)

SCENE 4

MAXIMO; ELECTRA

Electra (Coming back).—They are sleeping like two little
angels. I'll leave them there a half-hour more to rest their
tired little bodies.

Maximo.—We ought to look after our own little bodies,
or big bodies . . . shall we eat?

Electra.—Whenever you like. I have everything ready.
(Turns to the sideboard where there is a dinner service, plates,
tablecloth, napkins, and a fruit dish.)

Maximo.—I like that. Everything prompt. That's the
way one always reaches one's goal.

Electra (Spreading the tablecloth).—In that way . . .
But with all my care I shall never get anywhere, alas!

Maximo.—Let me help you set the table. (ELECTRA
gives him the dishes, plates, the wine and bread.) Yes, you
will . . .

Electra.—Do you think so?

Maximo.—I am as certain as I am . . . that I am
as hungry as fifty horses.

Electra.—I am glad. Now you mustn't fail to like the dinner that these poor hands have prepared.

Maximo.—Bring it and we shall see.

Electra.—Right away. (*Exit to the interior of the house.*)

SCENE 5

MAXIMO; GIL

Maximo.—Strange! Every word, every action, every movement of this precious little woman, in the freedom she enjoys, are just so many more flashes thrown out by her uneasy soul, nobly ambitious, anxious to show itself great in affection and superior in virtue. (*With ardor.*) Blessed be she who brings joy and light to this hiding-place of science, sad and dark, and with her charms makes of this barrenness a paradise! Blessed be she who has come to take from his abstraction this Faust, grown old at thirty-five, and to say to him “One does not live by truths alone” (*Gil, who has entered a short time before, interrupts him, approaching without being seen.*)

Gil (Satisfied, showing his calculations).—Here it is. I think I have obtained the exact figure.

Maximo (Takes the paper and looks at it vaguely, without attention).—Exactness! . . . But do you think that one lives only by truths? . . . Saturated with them, the soul longs for dreams, runs after them without knowing whether it goes from the correct to the incorrect, or from error to reality. (*Reads mechanically.*) 0, 318.73 . . . Considering it well, Gil, our mistakes in calculation are pardonable.

Gil.—Yes, sir . . . one gets distracted easily, thinking of . . .

Maximo.—Of vague things, undetermined, pleasant, and the numbers escape, vanish in the air . . .

Gil.—And anyone may catch them. Absent-minded, I confused the figure of the potential with that of the resistance . . . But now I have corrected it . . . Tell me if it is right.

Maximo (Reads).—0, 318.73. . . . (*With a sudden transition to an expansive pleasure.*) And if it were not, Gil

if to brighten your mind with sweet ideas, with roseate images, poetic ones, you should have made a mistake, what would it matter? Our mistress, our tyrant, "Exactness" would pardon it.

Gil—Ah, sir, she does not pardon. She is very severe. She wears us out, enslaves us, gives us no chance to breathe.

Maximo.—Today, no; today she is indulgent. The mistress, ordinarily so sullen, today smiles at us with a merry face. You see this sum?

Gil (*Saying it from memory, well satisfied*).—o, 318.73.

Maximo.—Well, I say that the greatest poets of the world, Homer and Virgil, Dante, Lope, Calderon, never wrote a strophe as inspired and poetic as this is for me—these poor numbers . . . It is true that the harmony, the poetic enchantment is not in them. It is in . . . Go on now . . . You may go to lunch . . . Leave me . . . leave us. . . . (*Pushes him out.*) I don't know myself; I also am confused . . . I am very bright with this loss of my calmness . . . It is she who . . . (*From a convenient place on the stage, he looks towards the interior.*) There is the imagination, there is the ideal, there the divine doll, among the pots. . . . (*Returns to the front of the stage.*) Oh, Electra, you, playful and smiling, how full of life and hope, and science, how inert, how solitary, how empty!

SCENE 6

MAXIMO; ELECTRA

Electra (*Entering with a smoking casserole*).—Here is the best thing.

Maximo.—Let's see, let's see what you have made? Rice with giblets! It looks superb! (*Sits down.*)

Electra.—You can praise it in advance, for it is very good . . . You will see. (*Sits down.*)

Maximo.—There has come into my house a little angel of a cook . . .

Electra.—Call me what you wish, Maximo, but don't call me an angel.

Maximo.—An angel of the kitchen . . . (*Both laugh.*)

Electra.—Not that either. (*Passing him a plate.*) Shall I serve you?

Maximo.—Not so much.

Electra.—You see there is nothing else. I thought that in eating, one good thing is better than a lot of mediocre ones.
(They begin to eat.)

Maximo.—You have struck it! . . . Do you know what I am laughing about? What if Evarista should come now and find us eating, so, alone . . . !

Electra.—And if she knew that I cooked the meal! . . .

Maximo.—Girl, do you know that this rice is very good, very well cooked?

Electra.—In Hendaye, a Valencian lady was my teacher. She gave me a real course in rice. I know how to cook it at least seven ways, all delicious.

Maximo.—Why, little one, you are a world to be discovered . . .

Electra.—And who is my Columbus?

Maximo.—There is no Columbus. I say you are a world that discovers itself.

Electra (Laughing).—Well, because I am such a little world, that thinks itself worthy of being discovered, poor me!—They will decide to make a nun out of me in order to keep me from the dangers which threaten innocence.

Maximo (After trying the wine, looks at the label).—Well, you haven't brought a bad wine.

Electra.—In your magnificent cellar, which is like a library of rich wine, I have selected the best Bordeaux and an extra fine Sherry.

Maximo.—Very good. The librarian is not stupid.

Electra.—Why yes, I know already what is awaiting me—the solitude of a convent . . .

Maximo.—I fear so. You cannot escape from it.

Electra (Frightened).—What?

Maximo (Correcting himself).—I mean, yes, you shall escape . . . I shall save you . . .

Electra.—You have promised to protect me.

Maximo.—Yes, yes! Nothing more was necessary. . .

Electra (With great interest).—And what do you propose to do? Tell me . . .

Maximo.—You will see . . . The affair is serious.

Electra.—Talk with my aunt . . . and . . . what else?

Maximo.—Well . . . I shall talk with your aunt.

Electra.—And what will you say to her?

Maximo.—I shall talk with your uncle . . .

Electra (Impatiently).—Good; let us suppose that you have talked with all the aunts and uncles in the world . . . After that . . .

Maximo.—What does the course of procedure matter to you? Be sure that I shall take you under my protection, and once that you are put in an honorable and safe place, I shall proceed to the selection of a lover. Of this I wish to talk to you now.

Electra.—Are you going to scold me?

Maximo.—No. They have told me already that you are deceiving yourself with the game of living dolls, or lovers they call themselves.

Electra.—I have sought in them a medicine for my weariness, and with every dose I get more bored . . .

Maximo.—None of them has awakened in you a feeling . . . other than jests?

Electra.—Not one.

Maximo.—They have all declared themselves in writing?

Electra.—Some . . . in the language of the eyes which I do not always know how to interpret. So I do not count *them*.

Maximo.—Yes, you should count all in the catalogue, those who show their affection in their eyes as well as those who use the pen. And here we are facing the serious condition which calls for my opinion and my counsel. *Electra*, you ought to marry, and soon.

Electra (Lowering her eyes, bashfully).—Soon? Heavens, what is the hurry?

Maximo.—The sooner the better. You need at your side a man, a husband. You have a heart, temperament, matrimonial instincts and virtues. Well, from the crowd of your suitors, it will be necessary for me to select one, the best,—one who on account of his qualities will be worthy of you. And the culmination of happiness will be that my choice coincides with your preference, for we should make no progress in the matter, be sure of that, if I did not succeed in arranging for you a love-match.

Electra (With spontaneousness).—Oh, yes, indeed.

Maximo.—A tranquil life, exemplary, fruitful, with a happy home . . .

Electra.—Oh, what loveliness! But do I merit all this?

Maximo.—I believe that you do . . . It will soon be seen. (*They finish eating the rice.*)

Electra.—Do you wish more?

Maximo.—No, thank you. I have eaten very well.

Electra (*Putting the fruit dish on the table.*).—For dessert I have nothing but fruit. I know that you like that very much.

Maximo (*Selecting a beautiful apple.*).—Yes, because this is the truth. In this the hand of man has no part . . . except to pick it.

Electra.—It is the work of God. Beautiful, splendid, with no artificiality.

Maximo.—God makes these wonderful things in order that man may pick them and eat them . . . But not all have the happiness or the good fortune to pass under the tree . . . (*Pares an apple.*)

Electra.—Yes, they pass under it . . . but some go absorbed looking at the ground, so that they do not see the beautiful fruit which says to them: “Pick me, enjoy me.” And they would only need to get away from their thoughts for one moment and raise their eyes . . .

Maximo (*Looking at her.*).—Raise their eyes, . . . I . . . I am looking now . . .

SCENE 7

ELECTRA; MAXIMO; MARIANO, (*at the left.*)

Mariano.—Sir . . .

Maximo.—What is it?

Mariano.—It is fiery red!

Electra.—Ah, the fusion!

Maximo.—When it comes to a white heat, let me know.

Mariano (*About to go.*).—All right.

Maximo.—Listen. Have the Bunsen battery arranged for us in the factory. Tell them that before lighting up I need the large dynamo for a test.

Mariano.—Very well. (*Exit at the back.*)

SCENE 8

ELECTRA; MAXIMO; (*afterwards the WORKMAN.*)

Electra (Sadly).—Soon you will have to be busy with the fusion, and I . . .

Maximo.—You . . . naturally will go back home.

Electra (Sighing).—Alas! I don't like to think of the fuss there will be when I go in . . .

Maximo.—Listen, keep still and wait . . .

Electra.—Wait, wait, always wait! (*They finish eating.*) ELECTRA rises and clears off the dishes.) Oh, if you do not look after this poor orphan, I fear that she is going to be very unhappy . . . It is too bad. Evarista and Pantoja insist that I must be an angel, and I . . . God does not call me for the angelical path.

Maximo (Who has risen and seems disposed to continue his work).—Do not fear. Trust in me. I shall claim you as your protector, as your teacher . . .

Electra (Approaching him with a supplicating manner).—But do not delay. For the health of your children, Maximo, do not delay. Listen to what I think: Why don't you take me like one of your children and keep me like them and with them?

Maximo (With seriousness, very affectionately).—Do you know that is an excellent idea. We must think it over . . . Let me think about it.

Workman (At the back).—The Marquis of Ronda.

Electra (Frightened).—Oh, I must go . . .

Maximo.—No, daughter, he is our friend, our best friend . . . You will see. (*To the WORKMAN.*) Let him come in. (*Exit WORKMAN.*)

Electra.—He will think perhaps . . .

Maximo.—He will think nothing bad . . . Have you made coffee?

Electra.—I will go and strain it now . . . the finest coffee. I know how to make it delicious.

Maximo.—Bring it in . . . Let us invite the Marquis.

Electra.—All right, all right . . . Since you order it . . . I am going for the coffee. (*Exit gaily, with light step.*)

SCENE 9

MAXIMO; THE MARQUIS; ELECTRA; (*at the end of the scene, MARIANO.*)

Maximo.—Come in, Marquis.

Marquis.—My dear, illustrious friend. (*Disconsolately, looking around.*) And Electra?

Maximo.—In the kitchen.

Marquis.—In the kitchen!

Maximo.—She will be back in a moment. We have eaten and now we shall take coffee.

Marquis.—You have eaten! (*Looking at the table.*)

Maximo.—Some delicious rice, prepared by her.

Marquis.—Thank God for that! (*Very disconsolately.*) But, man, not invite me! Well, I shall not pardon you.

Maximo.—Why, it was all so unexpected! Why didn't you come in before, when you were in the shop . . . ?

Marquis.—That's true . . . it is my fault.

Maximo.—We shall take coffee. And excuse, my dear Marquis, having it in this poor student's room.

Marquis.—I have already told you, I can never understand how you, a man of means, having upstairs such fine rooms . . .

Maximo.—It is very simple . . . Science and the habit of study shut me up in this den. I have put my children in the rooms downstairs in order to have them near me, and here I live like a hermit.

Marquis.—Forgetting that you are very rich . . .

Maximo.—My opulence is simplicity, my luxury, solitude, my repose, work, and so I have to live as long as I am alone.

Marquis.—The solitude approaches its end. It must be decided. In short, I come, my dear friend, to forewarn you . . . (*Enters ELECTRA with the coffee.*) Oh, the charming, divine housekeeper!

Electra (*Advances carefully with the tray in which she has the service, fearing that some piece may fall.*)—Heavens, Marquis, don't scold me.

Marquis.—I scold you!

Electra.—Nor make me laugh! I am afraid of breaking something. Be careful! (*The MARQUIS takes the tray.*)

Marquis.—I am here to prevent any catastrophe. (*Puts*

all on the table.) I have nothing to scold you for, my daughter. Anywhere else this liberty would frighten me. In the dwelling of most honorable industry, of the most exquisite chivalry, it causes me no fear.

Maximo.—Thanks, Sir Marquis. (*Serves them the coffee.*)

Marquis.—The lady and gentleman across the way will not appreciate it so highly . . . The news of what is happening here has reached the Asylum of Santa Clara, foundation of María Requesens. Confusion and alarm of the García Yuste's. The whole conclave is gathered there.

Electra.—God have mercy on me!

Marquis.—Be calm, my daughter!

Maximo.—Never mind, leave it to us.

Marquis.—In me, for all the contingencies that this prank may involve, you have an unconditional friend, a valiant defender.

Electra (Affectionately).—Oh, Marquis, how good you are!

Maximo.—How kind!

Electra.—And what have you to say of my coffee?

Marquis.—That it is fit for Jupiter, the father of the gods. In Olympus they never served better. Blessed be the hands that made it! God grant to my old age the consolation of repeating these tete-a-tetes with the same two persons . . . (*Very affectionately, taking the hands of each.*) With the two friends who now listen to me, wait upon me and welcome me!

Electra.—Oh, what a beautiful wish!

Marquis.—I am going to allow myself to use with you, my dear Maximo, a sign of confidence. Do not take it badly . . . My gray hairs warrant me . . .

Maximo.—I can guess it, Marquis.

Marquis.—From this moment this reform shall be established . . . a social one. I am going to speak to you with familiarity.

Maximo.—I shall consider it a great honor.

Electra.—And why not to me?

Marquis (To MAXIMO).—What do you think? To her, too?

Maximo.—Yes, yes . . . under my responsibility.

Electra (Applauding).—Bravo, bravo!

Marquis (Very satisfied).—Well, my friends, I return your confidence by informing you that the Conclave is

preparing against you resolutions of unheard of severity.

Electra.—Dear me, what for?

Marquis.—The García Yuste's, very holy and very pious . . . God keep them . . . have started to navigate through the infinite, and wishing to rise, to rise very high, have thrown overboard the ballast, which is worldly logic. (*MAXIMO* makes signs of assent.)

Electra.—I don't understand.

Marquis.—This ballast, this lead, worldly logic, human logic, we shall pick it up.

Maximo (Laughing).—Very good, very good.

Electra (Applauding without understanding it).—Ballast, lead, picked up . . . human logic . . . Very good.

Marquis.—Masters of this force, this sacred logic, it is urgent that we prepare to frustrate the plans of the enemy. Our first determination—(*To ELECTRA.*) That you return home . . . Don't be frightened . . . You will not go alone.

Electra.—Oh, I breathe more freely.

Marquis.—There will go with you the two professors of worldly logic who are here.

Electra (Pleased).—Thank Heaven, what happiness! I, between the two, escorted by a pair of the Civil Guards.

Maximo (To the Marquis).—Don't you think we should go by day in order to see with what arrogance the criminals defy the broad daylight?

Marquis.—Oh, no. I think we should go after dark in order that it may be seen that our honesty does not fear the dark.

Maximo.—Excellent idea! By night!

Electra.—By night.

Mariano (Appearing at the left-hand door).—Sir, it is at a white heat!

Electra (With childish joy).—The fusion! (*She says this with unconscious joy.*)

Maximo (To MARIANO).—I can't go now. Tell me when it reaches a molten brightness. (*Exit MARIANO.*)

Marquis (With solemnity, taking a glass).—Permit me, my dear friends, to drink to the happy union, to the happy marriage of these two metals.

Maximo (With enthusiasm, raising the glass).—I drink to our first metallurgist, the noble Marquis of Ronda.

Electra (With emotion, following the toast).—To the great and affectionate friend! (PANTOJA appears at the right, coming from the garden. He remains in the door contemplating with a cold stupor the scene.)

SCENE IO

MAXIMO; ELECTRA; THE MARQUIS; PANTOJA

Marquis.—The enemy!

Electra (Frightened).—Don Salvador! The Lord help me!

Maximo.—Come in, Sir Pantoja. (PANTOJA advances silently, slowly). To what do I owe the honor . . . ?

Pantoja.—Anticipating my good friends, Urbano and Evarista, who will be back home soon, I am here to fulfill my duty and theirs.

Maximo.—Their duty . . . yours!

Marquis.—You come to surprise us, with the air of a spy.

Maximo.—Doubtless you see in us hardened criminals.

Pantoja.—I see nothing. I wish to see only Electra, for whom I have come, Electra who ought not to be here and who will withdraw now with me, and with me will weep her error. Takes the hand of ELECTRA, who is as if lifeless, motionless through fear.) Come.

Maximo.—Pardon me. (Serene and serious he approaches PANTOJA.) With all respect due to you, Sir Pantoja, I beg that you release her hand. Before taking it you should speak with me, who am the master of this house, and the one responsible for all that occurs in it, for all that you see . . . for that which you do not wish to see.

Pantoja (After a short hesitation, releases the hand of ELECTRA).—Very well, for the moment I release the hand of the poor creature, led astray, or brought here by deception, and I shall speak to you . . . to whom I wish to say but a few words: "I come for Electra. Give me that which is not yours, that which can never be yours."

Maximo.—Electra is free. I have not brought her here against her will, nor shall you take her away against her will.

Marquis.—You, who do not even indicate on what you base your authority!

Pantoja.—I do not need to tell you the basis of my

authority. Why should I take that trouble when I am sure that the gracious, but blind, child cannot deny the obedience that I ask of her? Electra, my dear daughter, is not a word or a look of mine sufficient to separate you from these men and take you to the arms of one who has summed up in you the purest love, who neither lives nor wishes to live except for you? (*Stiff and looking at the floor, ELECTRA remains silent.*)

Maximo.—No, it is not enough, this word of yours.

Marquis.—She does not seem convinced, my dear sir.

Maximo.—Allow me to question her. Electra, my dear child, answer: Does your heart and your conscience tell you that among all the men that you know, those whom you see here and those who are not present, that you owe the obedience of love to this man alone?

Marquis.—Ask your heart, daughter; ask your conscience.

Maximo.—And if he orders you to follow him and we wish you to remain here, which would you do of your own free will?

Electra (After a painful struggle).—Stay here.

Marquis.—You see?

Pantoja.—She is fascinated . . . She is not mistress of herself.

Maximo.—You will not insist.

Marquis.—You will declare yourself conquered.

Pantoja (With cold tenacity) —I do not consider myself conquered. Reason is always victorious, and I should deem myself unworthy of possessing that which God has given me and that I keep here, if I did not place it continually above all errors and excesses. No, I shall not yield. Maximo, the metals which burn in your furnaces are less firm than I. Your powerful machines are but structures of reed if you compare them with my will. Electra belongs to me. It is sufficient that I say so.

Electra (Aside).—What a terror I feel!

Maximo.—If you wish to be sure of the power of your will, try it against me.

Pantoja.—I do not need to try it against you nor anyone, but to do that which I ought.

Maximo.—Duty, that is my strength.

Pantoja.—A duty with movable grounds and accidental ends. My duty is moved by a conscience as strong and firm

as the axis of the Universe, and my ends are so high that you cannot see them, nor will you ever be able to see them.

Maximo.—Rise as high as you like. I shall go to the very highest point to tell you that I do not fear you, nor does Electra either.

Pantoja.—The man is stubborn.

Maximo.—In order that you may talk about firm metals.

Marquis.—Electra will go home with us.

Maximo.—With me, and this will be enough for her aunt and uncle to pardon her caprice.

Pantoja.—They will not pardon her, nor will they receive her better, going with you, because they cannot go against their feelings, against their firmest convictions. (*With ecstasy*.) I am in the world in order that Electra may not be lost, and she shall not be lost. This is the wish of the Divine Will, of which mine is the reflection, which seems to you capricious brutality, because you do not understand the great undertakings of the spirit, poor blind ones, poor fools . . .

Electra (In consternation).—Don Salvador, by the Virgin, don't get angry. I am not bad . . . Maximo is good . . . You know it . . . my aunt and uncle know it . . . You say that I ought not to be here . . . ! All right . . . I shall go back home. Maximo and the Marquis will go with me and my aunt and uncle will pardon me. (*To MAXIMO and the MARQUIS*.) Isn't it true that they will pardon me? . . . (*To PANTOJA*.) Why do you wish Maximo ill, who has never done you any harm? Isn't that so? What reason is there in this ill-will?

Maximo.—It is not ill-will; it is hatred secret and inextinguishable.

Pantoja.—Hate you, no. My creed forbids hate. It is certain that between us, because of your insane ideas, there is a certain incompatibility . . . Moreover, your father, Lazarus Yuste and I, alas! we had profound differences of which it is better not to speak now. But I do not hate you, Maximo . . . Rather do I esteem you. (*Combining his austere tone with another, more suave and conciliatory*.) Leaving aside the severity with which I spoke to you in the beginning, and forcing somewhat my character . . . I beg you that you permit Electra to go with me.

Maximo (Inflexible).—I cannot grant your request.

Pantoja (Becoming more violent).—For the second time, Maximo, forgetting all resentment, almost, almost, desiring your friendship, I beg you . . . let her go.

Maximo.—Impossible.

Pantoja (Swallowing his humiliation).—All right, all right . . . You have refused me the second time . . . I have only two cheeks . . . If I had three on which to receive your blows, I should beg you again. (*With gravity and stiffness, with no inflection of tenderness.*) Adieu, Electra . . . Maximo, Marquis, adieu.

Electra (In a low voice to MAXIMO).—For Heaven's sake, Maximo, compromise a little.

Maximo (Positively).—No.

Electra.—Didn't you say that you and the Marquis would take me? Let us all go together. (*This is heard by PANTOJA as he moves slowly towards the door. Stops.*)

Maximo (With energy).—No . . . He must go first. When it suits us, and without the protection of anyone. He shall go.

Pantoja (Coldly, now in the door).—And for what do you go? To make the situation of the poor girl worse?

Maximo.—I am going . . . for what am I going?

Pantoja.—May I not know it?

Maximo.—It is unnecessary.

Pantoja.—I have not tried to get you to reveal to me your intentions. And why should I, if I know them? (*Takes some steps towards the center of the stage, fixing his gaze on MAXIMO.*) I do not trust the expression of your eyes. I penetrate into the profoundest depths of your mind; there I see what you are thinking . . . I did not question you to know your intention, for I know it already, but not from hearing the fine promises you have made. In you there is no truth, in you there is no good, no, no, no . . . (*Goes out slowly, repeating the last words.*)

SCENE II.

ELECTRA; MAXIMO; THE MARQUIS; MARIANO.

Electra (Frightened).—He has gone . . . Will he come back?

Marquis.—What a man! (*It begins to grow dark.*)

Maximo.—Rather than a man, he is a mountain that wishes to fall upon us and crush us.

Marquis.—But he will not fall . . . It is an imaginary and inoffensive mountain.

Electra (*In consternation, seeking refuge by the side of MAXIMO.*)—Protect me, Maximo. Take away from me this fear.

Maximo.—Have no fear. Come to me. (*Takes her by the hands.*)

Marquis.—It is growing dark. We ought to go now.

Electra.—Let's go. (*Incredulous and fearful.*) But really are you going with me?

Maximo.—Together in this, as we shall be in all our lives . . .

Electra.—With you always? (*The darkness increases.*)

Mariano (*At the door on the left.*)—Sir, it is molten white.

Marquis (*To MARIANO.*)—The fusion is finished. Put out the furnaces.

Maximo (*With great effusion, kissing her hands.*)—Luminous soul, great heart, with you always . . . I am going to tell your aunt and uncle that I claim you, that you will be my companion and the mother of my children.

Electra (*Oppressed, as if the joy overcomes her.*)—Do not deceive me . . . Shall I live with your children, shall I be with them the oldest one . . . Shall I be your wife?

Maxima (*In a strong voice.*)—Yes, yes. (*The back room being lighted the whole stage is brilliant.*)

Maximo.—Let us go . . . It is already night.

Electra.—It is day . . . An eternal day for me! (*MAXIMO puts his arm around her and they go out. THE MARQUIS follows them.*)

ACT IV

Garden of the house of GARCIA YUSTE. At the right, entrance to the house, with a stairway of a few steps. At the left, corresponding to the entrance, a mass of grotto-like architecture, decorated with bas-reliefs: at its foot a stone bench in an angle—of elegant appearance. Urns of exotic plants in pots decorate this terrace, whose floor is mosaic, between the building and the sanded floor of the garden.

Farther back and in the rear, the garden, with great trees and clusters of flowers. In the center are three curved walks. That on the left leads to the street. Iron chairs. It is day.

SCENE I

ELECTRA; PATROS, (*with a basket of flowers she has just gathered*).

Electra. (*Taking from her pocket a letter*).—Leave the flowers here and take the letter.

Patros (*Leaves the flowers*).—Three have gone today.

Electra. (*Taking the small flowers and making of them three bouquets*).—There is not enough time for Maximo and me to say the world of things we wish.

Patros.—Blessed be God who in one night has brought the young lady such happiness.

Electra.—Last night he asked my hand. Today my aunt and uncle will decide the date of the wedding.

Patros.—And meanwhile letters go and come.

Electra.—In these hours of feverish impatience, Maximo and I cannot deprive ourselves of written communications. In my letter of eight-fifteen I told him some very serious things. In that of nine-twenty-five I told him not to neglect to give little Lola the spoonful of syrup every two hours, and in this which you are taking I am telling him that my aunt is at mass and that she has not come back yet. One has to talk . . . naturally.

Patros.—Of course . . . The mistress will not be back before eleven. . . .

Electra.—And at eleven I shall go with my uncle. (*Tying up the three bouquets*.) Here, here they are. This for him and these for the children. One for each so they will not quarrel. . . . (*Starting to arrange a large bouquet*.) Now a bouquet for the Virgin de los Dolores. . . . Go and come back quickly to help me. . . . Wait for a reply, for even if it is only two words it will fill me with joy.

Patros.—I shall go quickly. (*Goes out at the rear*.)

Electra (*Selecting the most beautiful flowers for the bouquet*).—Today, Virgin mine, my offering will be larger than usual—it ought to be so large that there would not be a flower left in my uncle's garden. I should like today to lay

before your image all the pretty things that there are in Nature, the roses, the stars, the hearts that know how to love . . . Oh, Holy Virgin, our counsel and hope, do not abandon me. Grant me the blessings I asked of you and you promised me last night, speaking to me with the expression of your divine eyes, when with my tears I told you my anxiety, my gratitude . . . !

Patros (Hurrying through the garden).—I do not bring a letter, but a message that is worth more.

Electra.—What? Out with it.

Patros.—Right away, as soon as some gentlemen go, who are just leaving . . . Wait for him here, and you can talk a while . . . He has to go to a telephonic conference.

Electra (Looking towards the back of the stage).—Will he come? (*Hears steps.*) It seems . . .

Patros.—He is coming now.

Electra (Giving her the bouquet).—Here . . . for the Virgin.

Patros.—All right. All right.

Electra (Stopping her).—But don't give it to the Virgin of the Oratory . . . be careful, Patros . . . Not to the one in the Oratory, but to mine, that I have at the head of my bed. Please don't make a mistake.

Patros.—Oh, no . . . I know! (*Enters hurriedly into the house.*)

SCENE 2

ELECTRA; MAXIMO; afterwards THE MARQUIS.

Maximo (At a distance, opening slightly his arms).—My girl!

Electra (The same).—My master!

Maximo.—Are we ashamed and don't know what to say?

Electra.—Very. You begin.

Maximo.—No, you . . . In order that you may get rid of your bashfulness, tell me a big story: that you do not love me.

Electra.—You tell me first a great truth.

Maximo.—That I adore you. (*They approach each other.*)

Electra.—False one, traitor! Take this rose that I picked

for you. It is very small and modest. So I should always like to be your little one. (*Puts it in his button-hole.*)

Maximo.—Big heart, great intelligence!

Electra.—Increase the heart and discount the intelligence.

Maximo.—I shall discount nothing.

Electra.—Do you know? I should like to be very rude and very rough in order to come to you in the greatest ignorance, so that you might teach me my first ideas. I should like to have nothing that does not come from you.

Maximo.—Beautiful ideas and noble sentiments you have in abundance. God has endowed you generously, heaping on you excellences, and now puts you in my hands that this very slow workman may model you, finish you, polish you. . .

Electra.—You are going to show to advantage, master; I tell you that you will.

Maximo.—I shall make a good, sensible, loving woman . . . Is that showing off! (*Looks at his watch.*)

Electra.—Don't stay on my account. We must consider first our obligations. Will you be very late?

Maximo.—I think not . . . I shall be here when Evarista returns from mass.

Electra.—And has our Marquis come as he promised?

Maximo.—I left him in the house writing a letter to his notary. Incomparable friend! . . . Oh, do you know! Last night when we went back to the house, I told him the novel of your paternity . . . the novel in two chapters. The man was indignant . . . but by it we gain, for we have his complete devotion and with all the more heart and affection he defends us.

Electra (Surprised).—But do we still need defense?

Maximo.—In the essential thing, no, of course not. . . But how can we be sure that the rivals of our friend will not trouble us with difficulties, with obstacles of a secondary nature?

Electra (Becoming tranquil).—We should laugh at them.

Maximo.—But even while laughing we should be prepared . . .

Marquis (Quickly from the rear).—Here yet?

Maximo.—Marquis, into your hands I commend my soul.

Marquis (Smiling affectionately).—You will be late!

Maximo.—I am going now. I shall see you very soon.

Electra (Seeing him start).—Run . . . Come back quickly.

SCENE 3

ELECTRA; THE MARQUIS.

Marquis.—Good for the scientific gallant . . . And what an admirable find for you! Your youthful love needs the love of a widower, your wild imagination a cold reason. At the side of this man my girl will become a great woman.

Electra.—I shall be that which he wishes to make me. (*With great curiosity.*) Tell me, Marquis, did you know the poor wife of Maximo? My curiosity will not surprise you . . . It is very natural that I should want to know the former life of the man I love.

Marquis.—I didn't know her . . . I saw her with Maximo once or twice. She was a Basque, rough and ordinary, not very intelligent, but a good wife. But that marriage could not have been a model of happiness.

Electra.—Did you know Maximo's parents?

Marquis.—I never saw his mother; she was French, a lady of great merit. My wife was a friend of hers. I knew Lazarus Yuste, but not intimately, in Spain and in France about the year '68 . . . A man very intelligent and fortunate in mines, and with no little luck, they say, too, in love affairs. He was a man who caused talk.

Electra.—In this he was not like his son who is correctness itself.

Marquis.—You may well say that you have drawn the prize of a husband, the most worthy and the finest: head of a giant, heart of a child. And having all that, he is the possessor of a good fortune—that which his father left him and the recent inheritance from his French uncle. What more could you wish? I should answer: "Child, there is nothing more."

Electra (*Sighing deeply.*).—Alas! . . . And now tell me, Marquis, can I be tranquil?

Marquis.—Absolutely.

Electra.—And have I nothing to fear from the two persons who . . . ? You already know that they think they have an authority. . . .

Marquis.—They may bother you some, perhaps . . . But we shall teach them their place.

Electra.—And Cuesta? . . .

Marquis.—He is the least to be feared. I have talked with him today and I trust he will end by helping us.

Electra.—And Pantoja? . . .

Marquis.—He will grumble, he will give us a few headaches, if we let him; he will blow the biblical trumpet to frighten us, but don't pay any attention to him.

Electra.—Really?

Marquis.—He can do nothing, absolutely nothing.

Electra.—And if I find him here, I should not be frightened?

Marquis.—Why should you be frightened by the monotonous buzzing of a gadfly that goes and comes, circles and turns. . . ?

Electra.—Oh, what a satisfaction to my poor mind! (*With affectionate enthusiasm.*) Marquis of Ronda, may God bless you!

Marquis (Very affectionately).—My poor girl! God will be with you.

SCENE 4

THE SAME; DON URBANO, (*who comes from the house, with hat on*).

Don Urbano.—Marquis, God be with you.

Marquis.—May I speak with you, my dear Urbano?

Don Urbano.—Would it be just as well after mass? (*To ELECTRA.*) But, child, you are so quiet! The bells are ringing already.

Electra.—I have only to put on my hat. A half minute, Uncle. (*Enters hurriedly into the house.*)

Marquis.—Let us settle the day of the wedding and draw up the act of consent.

Don Urbano.—It would be better to talk about that with Evarista.

Marquis.—But, my friend, the time has come for you to put up a bold front to certain interferences that annul the authority of the head of the family.

Don Urbano.—My dear Marquis, ask me to change completely, to overturn the planetary system, to take the stars from the heavens, but do not ask me to oppose the opinions of my wife.

Marquis.—Man, don't show such submissiveness . . .

I insist that I should discuss this matter with you and not with Evarista.

Don Urbano.—Come with us to mass and we will talk about it.

Marquis.—All right, I will go.

SCENE 5

THE SAME; ELECTRA; EVARISTA; PANTOJA.

Electra (With hat, gloves and prayer-book).—Here I am.

Don Urbano.—Come on, the Marquis is going with us.

Evarista (Entering at the left in the rear, followed by PANTOJA).—Go on quickly.

Pantoja.—Quickly if you want to get there in time.

Evarista.—Will you come back, Marquis?

Marquis.—Oh, certainly, without fail.

Evarista.—Good-bye. (*ELECTRA, the MARQUIS and DON URBANO, exit at rear.*)

SCENE 6

EVARISTA; PANTOJA, who in an attitude of great fatigue, throws himself on the bench in the left foreground.

Evarista.—Shall we go into the house?

Pantoja.—No, let me get my breath. In the church I almost stifled . . . the heat, the crowd . . .

Evarista.—I will have them bring you some refreshment. Balbina!

Pantoja.—No, I thank you.

Evarista.—A cup of lime tea

Pantoja.—No, thanks. (*Enters BALBINA. Her mistress gives her her mantilla, which she has just taken off, and her prayer-book and sends her away.*)

Evarista.—There is no reason, my friend, for such dejection.

Pantoja.—It is not my pride, as they say, that is wounded. It is something more delicate and deeper. There is denied me the consolation, the glory of guiding this poor girl and

leading her along the paths of righteousness. And it afflicts me more than you, so in sympathy with my ideas, you, in whom I saw a faithful friend and a fervent ally, abandon me at the critical hour.

Evarista.—Pardon me, Don Salvador, I do not abandon you. We were agreed to keep her, I do not say shut her up, this crazy girl, in San José de la Penitencia, watching over her discipline and purification . . . But there has arisen unexpectedly the inconceivable caprice of Maximo, and I cannot, I cannot in any way refuse my consent . . . It would be a piece of folly . . . it does not concern me . . . But of Maximo, as a man of good conduct, what have you to say?

Pantoja.—Nothing. (*Correcting himself.*) Oh, yes, I might say something . . . But for the moment I shall say only that Electra is not prepared for matrimony, nor in a state to choose properly . . . I do not oppose absolutely her marriage, provided it be with a man whose ideas cannot hurt her . . . But I will come to this later. The first thing is that this tender creature should enter the convent, where we shall test her, we shall try with extreme tact her character, her tastes, her affections, and in view of what we shall determine, it can be decided . . . (*With haughtiness.*) What have you to say?

Evarista (Intimidated).—That for this plan . . . very fine, I admit . . . I cannot offer you my cooperation.

Pantoja (With arrogance, walking up and down).—So according to you, Doña Evarista, if the girl wishes to be lost, let her be lost; if she insists on her own damnation, let her be damned quickly.

Evarista (With greater timidity, as if under a spell).—Her ruin! . . . And how can I help it? . . . Is it in my hands?

Pantoja (With energy).—It is.

Evarista.—Oh, no! . . . I lack courage to interfere . . . And with what right? . . . Impossible, Don Salvador, impossible.

Pantoja (Asserting more and more his authority).—You must know, my friend, that the act of separating Electra from a world in which innumerable malignant beasts surround her and threaten her is not despotism. It is love in the purest expression of maternal affection, which often

hurts in order to heal . . . Do you doubt that the great aim of my life today is the welfare of the poor girl?

Evarista (More and more intimidated).—I do not doubt it . . . I cannot doubt it.

Pantoja (With effusion and eloquence).—I love Electra with a love so intense that all the subtleties of human speech would not suffice to declare it. When my eyes saw her the voice of blood cried out with me, saying that this creature belonged to me . . . I wish and I ought to have her under my sacred and paternal rule that she may love me as the angels love . . . that she should be my image in conduct, my reflection in ideas. That she should recognize her duty to suffer for those who gave her life, and purifying, should help us, who were wicked, to obtain pardon . . . For God's sake, do you not understand me?

Evarista (Overcome).—Yes, yes. And how I admire your powerful intellect!

Pantoja.—I prefer less admiration and more efficiency in my favor.

Evarista.—I cannot . . . (*Sits down weeping and depressed.*)

Pantoja.—Naturally Electra cannot inspire in you the great interest that she does in me. (*Using suave means of persuasion.*) If at first the separation of the girl from worldly pleasures would cause her sorrow, it would soon bring her peace and happy calm . . . I shall endow her amply. All that I possess will be hers, for the splendor of her holy house . . . Electra will be named Mother Superior and under my authority will govern the Congregation . . . (*With deep emotion.*) How happy she will be, and I so happy! (*Remains as in a state of exaltation.*)

Evarista.—I understand, indeed, that by not acceding to what you ask me, I deprive this creature of reaching the highest state of human perfection . . . You well know my sentiments. With what pleasure I would exchange the wealth in which I live for the glory of directing obscurely a religious house with much work and humility! . . . I always admire you for your protection of La Penitencia. I admire you more when I know that you redoubled your aid when my poor Eleuteria, transfixed with sorrow like a new Magdalen, was seeking in this institution peace and pardon. In your act I saw the most pure spirituality.

Pantoja.—Yes, when your unhappy cousin entered that house, my protection was not only more positive, but more spiritual. I never saw Eleuteria after she was converted, since she never allowed herself to be seen by anyone, not even by me. But I went daily to the church and conversed in spirit with the penitent, considering her regenerated, as indeed she was. The unhappy one died at the age of forty-five. I asked permission to bury her in the interior of the edifice, and since then I have protected more the Congregation. I have made it entirely mine, because in it rested the remains of her whom I loved.

Evarista.—And now, he whom we may well call the founder, visits the holy house every day, without missing one, and the humble and poetic cemetery where the deceased sisters rest . . .

Pantoja (With vivacity).—Do you know about it?

Evarista.—I do . . . And walks around the flowered patio in the shade of the cypresses and oleanders . . .

Pantoja.—That is true. And how did you know? . . .

Evarista.—The founder walks and wanders about, praying for himself and for the poor sinner, imploring for her rest and his own.

Pantoja.—Oh, yes . . . There will rest my poor bones, too. (*With great vehemence.*) I wish, moreover, that just as my spirit may not leave that house, in it may reside also, so long as there be need, the spirit of Electra . . . I shall not force her to the life of the cloister; but if after trying it, she should find enjoyment in the beautiful life and should wish to remain in it, I should believe that God had granted to me the most ineffable of favors. Oh, what a beautiful end, what grandeur and what joy!

Evarista (With lively emotion).—Grandeur, indeed . . . incomparable idealism!

Pantoja.—Do you still doubt that my ends are high, that no insane passion moves me?

Evarista.—How should I doubt that?

Pantoja.—Then if my plan seems to you a good one, why will you not help me?

Evarista.—Because I haven't the strength to do so.

Pantoja.—Not even giving the assurance that the seclusion of the girl will have the nature of a trial . . . ?

Evarista.—Not even so. No, Don Salvador, do not

count on me . . . (*Struggling with her conscience.*) I recognize the grandeur, the beauty of your ideas . . . I sympathize with them . . . I feel the echo of such ideas in my own heart; but I also owe something to the social life, and in the social and family life what you wish is impossible.

Pantoja (Hiding his vexation).—Very well. Patience. (*Petulant and gloomy, he walks up and down.*)

Evarista (After a pause).—What do you think? . . . That I shall yield . . . ?

Pantoja (With naturalness and firmness).—No, Madam

Evarista.—Then how . . .

Pantoja.—I don't know . . . An idea will come to me . . . I shall see . . . (*Making a resolution.*) Evarista, will you do me the favor to write a letter to the Mother Superior of La Penitencia?

Evarista.—Saying to her . . . ?

Pantoja.—That she should come here at once with two Sisters . . .

Evarista.—Why don't you write?

Pantoja.—Because I must hurry elsewhere.

Evarista.—And it must be soon?

Pantoja.—At once . . .

Evarista.—All right. (*Turns to the house.*)

Pantoja.—Send the letter without loss of time.

Evarista (Looking towards the garden).—It seems to me they are coming.

Pantoja.—Quickly, my friend . . .

Evarista.—I am going . . . God inspire us all. (*Enters the house.*)

Pantoja.—I shall be with you. (*Aside.*) I do not want them to see me. (*Hides himself behind the bushes at the right, near to the staircase.*)

SCENE 7

PANTOJA, hidden; ELECTRA; DON URBANO; THE MARQUIS, who return from mass; PATROS, who comes out of the house.

Electra (Approaching, meets PATROS at the foot of the staircase).—Has he come?

Patros.—No, Miss. (*There is heard the distant singing of children playing in the garden.*)

Electra.—I am dying of impatience. (*Takes off her hat and gloves, and gives them with the prayer-book to PATROS.*) I shall wait there playing with the children . . . First, I shall pick some flowers.

Don Urbano (To PATROS).—Your mistress . . . ?

Patros.—In the house, sir.

Marquis.—Let us go there.

Don Urbano.—You first, Marquis. (*They enter the house. After them, PATROS.*)

Electra (Admiring the flowers she has picked).—How pretty, how graceful this clematis! (*PANTOJA comes out; she is frightened at seeing him.*)

SCENE 8

ELECTRA; PANTOJA.

Pantoja.—My daughter, are you frightened at me?

Electra.—Alas, yes! . . . I cannot help it . . . And I ought not to be, no . . . Excuse me, Don Salvador . . . I am going to play with the children.

Pantoja.—Wait a moment. You are going to let the little ones communicate to you their joy?

Electra.—No, sir; I am going to communicate mine to them, for I have an abundance of it. (*The singing of the children dies away.*)

Pantoja.—I know already the cause of your great joy, I know it already . . .

Electra.—Well, if you know it there is nothing more to say . . . Good-bye, Don Salvador.

Pantoja (Detaining her).—Ungrateful one! Grant me a moment.

Electra.—Just a moment?

Pantoja.—No more.

Electra.—All right. (*Sits down on the stone bench. Puts the flowers to one side and goes on picking them to decorate herself with them, fastening them in her hair.*)

Pantoja.—I do not know why you keep up such a

reserve with me, knowing how much your existence and your happiness interest me . . .

Electra (Without looking at him, busy fastening the flowers).—Well, if my happiness interests you, rejoice with me; I am very happy.

Pantoja.—Happy today. And tomorrow?

Electra.—Tomorrow more so . . . And always more and more so.

Pantoja.—True and constant happiness, the indestructible joy, exists only in eternal love, superior to human inquietudes and miseries.

Electra (Having decorated her hair, puts flowers in her dress).—Are you playing again on the same key about my being an angel? . . . I am very worldly, Don Salvador. God made me a woman, since he put me on earth and not in Heaven.

Pantoja.—There are angels on earth, too; they are angels who in the midst of the disorders of the world, know how to live the life of the spirit.

Electra (Displaying herself decorated with flowers. Hears again nearer the singing of the children.) How is it? Do I seem an angel?

Pantoja.—You always seem so. I wish you were.

Electra.—This is the way I decorate myself to amuse the children. If you could just see how they laugh! (*With a sudden sad thought.*) Do you know what I look like now? Well, a dead child. This is the way they decorate the dead children when they bury them . . .

Pantoja.—In order to symbolize the ideal beauty of the Heaven to which they have gone.

Electra (Taking off the flowers).—No, no, I don't want to look like a dead child. I might imagine you were taking me to the tomb.

Pantoja.—I don't want to bury you. I should like to surround you with light. (*The song of the children dies away again and stops.*)

Electra.—They put lights on the dead children, too.

Pantoja.—I don't wish your death, but your life; not an uneasy and vulgar life, but sweet, free, high, loving, with eternal and pure love . . .

Electra (Confused).—And why do you wish all this for me?

Pantoja.—Because I love you with a love of a kind above

all human loves. I shall make you understand better the greatness of this affection by telling you that to avoid for you a slight suffering I would take upon myself the most horrible anguish you can imagine.

Electra (*Stupified, without hearing well*).—That is self-abnegation.

Pantoja.—Consider how much I shall suffer since I cannot keep from you a sorrow, a grief . . .

Electra.—From me?

Pantoja.—From you.

Electra.—A sorrow . . . ?

Pantoja.—A sorrow . . . which afflicts me the more since I have been the cause of it.

Electra (*Rebelling, rises*).—Sorrows! . . . No, I do not wish them . . . Keep them for yourself! . . . Bring me nothing but joys.

Pantoja (*Sympathetically*).—Would that I could, but it cannot be.

Electra.—Oh, now I am frightened. (*With a sudden idea that calms her*.) Ah! Now I understand . . . Poor Don Salvador. You want to tell me something bad about Maximo, something you think bad from your standard, and that according to mine is not . . . Don't trouble . . . I shall not believe it . . . (*Hurrying her speech, without giving PANTOJA time to reply*.) Maximo is the best man in the world, the first, and I detest anyone who says a word to me contrary to this fact . . . I detest him . . .

Pantoja.—For Heaven's sake, let me speak . . . don't be so hasty . . . My daughter, I do not speak evil of anyone, not even of those that hate me. Maximo is good, industrious, most intelligent . . . What more do you want?

Electra (*Pleased*).—That's it, that's it.

Pantoja.—I will say more, I will say that you may love him, that it is your duty to love him . . .

Electra (*With great satisfaction*).—Ah!

Pantoja.—And to love him with all your heart . . . (*Pause*.) He is not to blame, no.

Electra.—To blame! ((*Alarmed again*.) Come, are you going to end by telling something naughty about him?

Pantoja.—About him, no.

Electra.—Well, about whom? (*Remembering.*) Ah! . . . I know that the father of Maximo and you were terrible enemies . . . They have also told me that this gentleman, so honorable in business, was somewhat wild . . . you understand me . . . But this has nothing to do with me.

Pantoja.—Most innocent creature, you don't know what you are saying.

Electra.—I say that . . . that excellent man . . .

Pantoja.—Lazarus Yuste, yes . . . In naming him I have to associate his memory with that of a person who no longer exists . . . very dear to you . . .

Electra (*Understanding, and not wishing to understand.*)—To me!

Pantoja.—A person who no longer exists, very dear to you. (*Pause; they look at each other.*)

Electra (*In terror, with scarcely audible voice.*)—My mother! (*PANTOJA makes an affirmative sign with his head.*) My mother! (*Astonished, desiring, but fearing the explanation.*)

Pantoja.—The day of pardon has come. Let us pardon.

Electra (*Indignant*).—My mother, my poor mother! They do not name her except to dishonor her. (*Furious.*) I should like to have them in my hand to tear them to pieces, to destroy them, and not leave a single piece of them . . .

Pantoja.—Oh, alas for me! . . . I ought not, no, I ought not to have spoken to you of this. What would I give to have kept silent, to have hidden it from you all the days of my life . . . My affection commands me to speak.

Electra (*Anxiously*).—And I shall have to listen!

Pantoja.—I have said that Lazarus Yuste . . .

Electra (*Covering her ears*).—I don't want to hear it.

Pantoja.—Your mother was then just about the age you are now . . . eighteen years.

Electra (*Angry and rebelling*).—I don't believe it . . . I don't believe anything, I don't believe . . .

Pantoja.—She was a charming young woman . . .

Electra (*Rebelling more energetically*).—Be still! . . . I don't believe anything, I don't believe . . .

Pantoja (*Sorrowfully*).—My dear daughter, turn your eyes to God!

Electra (Upset).—I am dreaming . . . All that I see is a lie, illusion. (*Looking here and there with frightened eyes.*) Lies are these trees, this house . . . that sky . . . You . . . you do not exist . . . it is a monstrous nightmare . . . (*Beating her head.*) Wake up, unhappy woman, wake up.

Pantoja (Trying to calm her).—Electra, my dear child, innocent soul . . . !

Electra (With cries from her heart).—Mother, my mother! . . . the truth, tell me the truth . . . (*Out of her head, running about the stage.*) Where are you, mother? . . . I wish death or the truth . . . Mother, come to me . . . Mother! Mother! (*Runs quickly from the stage and is lost in the distant foliage. Soon there sounds again the singing of the children at play.*)

SCENE 9

PANTOJA; DON URBANO; THE MARQUIS. (*From the house quickly, after them, BALBINA and PATROS.*)

Don Urbano.—What has happened?

Marquis.—We heard Electra crying out.

Balbina.—And she went running through the garden.

Patros.—This way. (*Alarmed, both rush out and disappear in the garden.*)

Marquis (Looking through the bushes).—There she goes . . . She is running, and keeps on crying . . . Oh, my dear child! (*Rushes into the garden.*)

Don Urbano.—What is this?

Pantoja.—I will explain it to you . . . Wait . . .

Let us arrange now . . .

Don Urbano.—What?

Pantoja (Trying to arrange his ideas).—Let me think . . . It will be necessary to bring her to the house . . .

Come . . .

Don Urbano (Looking towards the garden).—Maximo is coming . . .

Pantoja (Vexed).—Oh, how inopportunely!

Don Urbano.—The children are running to him! . . .

It appears that they are telling him about it . . .

Electra is going towards the grotto. Maximo is going after the girl . . . Electra flees from him . . . The Marquis and my nephew are talking heatedly.

Pantoja.—Come . . . Be careful that Maximo does not interfere . . .

Don Urbano.—I am going. (*Goes into the garden.*)

Pantoja.—I fear some opposition. If I could . . .
(*Wishing to go, but not daring.*)

Balbina (*Returning hurriedly from the garden.*).—Poor girl . . . ! Calling for her mother . . . She has seated herself in the mouth of the grotto, surrounded by the children . . . and no one can move her from there

Pantoja.—And Maximo?

Balbina.—Filled with consternation like the rest of us, for we do not understand . . . I am going to tell my mistress . . .

Pantoja.—No, no. Have the Mother Superior and the Sisters come?

Balbina.—They are here.

Pantoja.—Do not say anything to your mistress. Go into the house and await my orders.

Balbina.—All right, sir.

Pantoja (*Undecided, and as if frightened.*).—For the first time in my life I cannot seem to come to a decision. I shall go there. (*At the entrance to the garden.*) No . . . Shall I wait? (*Making a resolve.*) I am going. (*A few steps away MAXIMO stops him, coming very agitated and angry from the garden.*)

SCENE IO

PANTOJA; MAXIMO

Maximo (*Speaking heatedly throughout the scene.*).—Stop . . . The Marquis tells me that after a long conversation with you, Electra went out from here in this terrible delirium.

Pantoja (*Disturbed*).—Here . . . Certainly . . . We were talking . . . The girl.

Maximo.—Bitten by the monster.

Pantoja.—Perhaps . . . But the monster is not I. It is a terrible monster that feeds itself on human acts. It is called History. (*Wishing to leave.*) Farewell.

Maximo (*Seizing him firmly by the arm.*).—Stop! . . . You are going to repeat now, right now, that which this monster of History told her to put her in such a state . . .

Pantoja (*Not knowing what to say.*). I . . . first of all . . . it is necessary to establish first that . . .

Maximo.—I don't wish any preambles . . . The truth, concrete, precise, exact. . . . You have offended Electra, you have upset her reason . . . with what words, with what ideas? I must know it quickly, quickly. It concerns a woman who is all the world to me.

Pantoja.—To me she is more; she is both Heaven and earth.

Maximo.—Let me know at once the machinery you have set in motion against this poor orphan, against me, against us, both, united now forever by the fusion of our souls. Let me know what poison you have put into the ear of her whom I can and ought to call already my wife. (*PANTOJA makes signs of doubt.*) What are you saying? That she will not be my wife . . . ? And you even jest!

Pantoja.—I have said nothing.

Maximo (*Breaking out in a rage, attacks him with great violence.*).—Well, by that silence, by that jest, mask of an egotism so great that the world cannot hold it; by that virtue, true or false, I know not, which in the shadow and without noise hurls the dart that annihilates us (*Seizes him by the collar and hurls him on the bench*); and by that mildness that poisons, by that suavity that poisons, may God confound you, great man or humble, eagle, snake, or whatever you may be.

Pantoja (*Recovering his breath.*).—What brutality! Infamous one! Madman!

Maximo.—I, yes, I am. You drive us all mad. (*Recovering from his rage.*) Who but you has had the diabolical power to take away the strength of my character, driving me to this terrible anger? Without considering it, I have crushed a weak and mean being, incapable of replying to force with force.

Pantoja (*Sitting up.*).—I shall reply with force. (*Returning to his normal state, expresses himself with a sententious*

calmness.) You are physical force, I am spiritual force. (MAXIMO looks at him astonished and confused.) I can do more than you, infinitely more. Do you doubt it?

Maximo.—What more can you do?

Pantoja.—Wrath stifles you; pride blinds you. I, ill-treated and mocked, recover easily my serenity. You, no; you tremble, Maximo, you who are force, you tremble.

Maximo.—I am still trembling with rage . . . Do not provoke it.

Pantoja (This time master of himself).—I shall neither provoke it, nor do I fear it . . . because you ill-treat me, I forgive you.

Maximo.—Forgive me! . . . me! Better insist that I should be a murderer and you will succeed.

Pantoja (With serene and cold gravity, without boasting).—Get angry, cry out, strike . . . Here I am immovable . . . There is no human force that can move me, no power that can separate me from my course. Injure me, wound me, kill me. I shall not defend myself. Barbarism may destroy my poor body, which is worth nothing; but that which is here, (*To his mind*) who can destroy it? And if perchance my will should be annihilated by death, the idea which I maintain will always remain alive, triumphant . . .

Maximo.—I do not see, I cannot see, great ideas in one who does not have greatness, in one who has no pity, tenderness nor compassion . . .

Pantoja.—My ends are very high. I go towards them . . . by any means possible.

Maximo (Terrified).—By any means possible! Towards God there is but one way to go—the right way. (*With exaltation.*) Oh, God! Thou canst not permit that one should reach thy Kingdom through dark byways, nor that one should reach thy glory trampling on the hearts of those who love . . . No, God, thou wilt not permit that, no, no! Rather than see a thing so absurd, let us see all Nature in ruin and all the machinery of the Universe broken.

Pantoja.—Sacrilege, you offend God with your words.

Maximo.—And you offend him more with your acts.

Pantoja.—Enough. I shall not argue with you. I have nothing more to say to you.

Maximo.—Nothing more? You have said nothing! (*Takes him rigorously by the arm.*) Now go with me in search

of Electra and in her presence either clear up my doubts and relieve me of this terrible anxiety, or you perish and I perish, and we all shall perish . . . I swear it by the memory of my mother.

Pantoja (After looking at him fixedly).—Let us go. (They take a few steps and EVARISTA comes out of the house.)

SCENE II

THE SAME; ELECTRA, (*after her* THE MOTHER SUPERIOR and TWO SISTERS of *La Penitencia*; afterwards PATROS.)

Evarista.—What has happened Maximo . . . ? I heard your voice, angry.

Maximo.—This man . . . Come, come, Aunt. (The MOTHER SUPERIOR and the SISTERS appear. He is alarmed at seeing them.) Oh . . . those women! . . . (PATROS enters hastily from the garden.)

Patros (Suffering and weeping).—Mistress, the young lady has lost her reason . . . She is running about, fleeing, calling on her mother . . . she neither sees nor hears those who wish to calm her.

Evarista (Advancing towards the garden).—My darling child!

Maximo (Looking towards the garden).—Now she is coming. (Releases PANTOJA and rushes out.)

Patros.—The master and the Marquis have succeeded in quieting her and are almost dragging her . . . (ELECTRA appears, led by DON URBANO and the MARQUIS, beside them MAXIMO. On seeing the persons on the stage she makes some resistance. Gently and affectionately they force her to approach. She has her hair and her bosom decorated with flowers.)

SCENE 12

ELECTRA; MAXIMO; EVARISTA; PANTOJA; DON URBANO; THE MARQUIS; PATROS; THE MOTHER SUPERIOR AND THE TWO SISTERS

Evarista.—My daughter, what delirium is this?

Maximo (Hastening to her affectionately).—My dear one, come, listen to me. My affection will be your reason.

Electra (Getting away from MAXIMO with a movement of modesty. Her delirium is calmed, no cries nor bursts of laughter. She speaks with accents of resigned and melancholy grief).—Do not come near me. I am not yours, no, no!

Maximo.—Why do you flee from me? Where are you going without me . . . ?

Pantoja (Who has passed to the right, to ELECTRA's side).—To truth, to eternal peace.

Electra.—I am looking for my mother. Do you know where my mother is? . . . I saw her in the midst of the children's game . . . she went afterwards towards the mimosa at the mouth of the grotto . . . She was looking at me and fleeing. (*The song of the children is heard in the distance.*)

Marquis.—Do you see Maximo. He will be your husband . . .

Maximo (With eagerness).—Nobody opposes it; there is no reason nor force to prevent it, Electra, my darling.

Electra (Imposing silence).—Now there is no question of wives nor husbands . . . Oh, how sad my heart is! . . . Now there are only fathers and brothers, many brothers . . . How large is the world and how lonesome it is, how empty! . . . Over it pass black clouds . . . the illusions that were mine and now are . . . no one's . . . there are the illusions of no one. . . . What solitude! Everything is extinguished, everyone weeps . . . the world is ending, is ending . . . (*With an outburst of fear.*) I wish to flee, I wish to hide myself. I do not wish fathers, I do not wish brothers . . . I want to go with my mother. Where is your tomb? There, both of us together, my mother and I, I shall tell her my sorrows and she shall tell me the truth . . . the truth.

Pantoja (Aside to EVARISTA).—It is the opportunity. Let us take advantage of it.

Evarista.—My daughter, we shall take you to peace, to rest.

Maximo.—That is not peace. Rest and reason are here. Electra is mine . . . (*EVARISTA starts to take her away.*) I claim her.

Electra.—Maximo, farewell. I do not belong to you; I

belong to my sorrow . . . My mother calls me to her side. (*Anxiously, expressing an intense emotion.*) I hear her voice . . .

Maximo.—Her voice!

Electra.—Silence . . . she calls me, she calls me. (*With joy and delirium.*)

Evarista.—Daughter, come to your senses!

Electra.—Do you hear? . . . I am coming, mother. (*Runs after the two Sisters.*) Let us go. (*To MAXIMO, who wishes to follow her.*) I alone . . . She calls me, alone. You no . . . Me alone. Do you not hear the voice which says: Ele-e-e-cctra! . . . ? I am coming to you my dear mother. (*The Sisters, EVARISTA and PANTOJA, surround her.*)

Maximo.—Iniquity! To rob me of her they have deprived her of her reason. (*He tries to release himself from the arms of the MARQUIS and DON URBANO.*)

Marquis.—Do not lose yours, too. (*Restraining himself.*)

Don Urbano.—Calm.

Marquis.—Let us go now . . . We shall recover her.

Maximo.—Ah! (*As if stifled.*) Take me back to truth, take me back to science. This uncertain, lying world is not for me.

ACT V.

Short curtain. Locutory in San José de la Penitencia. Lateral doors; in the back a window through which the patio is seen.

SCENE I

EVARISTA; SISTER DOROTEA

Evarista (Entering with the nun).—Don Salvador . . .?

Dorotea.—He came a while ago. He is in the office with the Mother Superior and the Sister Treasurer.

Evarista.—Urbano will find him there. While they are talking there, Sister Dorotea, tell me what the girl does, thinks and says. The selection of yourself, so sweet and gentle, to accompany her constantly and to be her friend and confidant in this solitude has been very fortunate.

Dorotea.—Electra honors me with her affection and I do not contribute little, it is true, to calm her disturbed soul.

Evarista (Pointing to her forehead).—And how is . . . ?

Dorotea.—Very well, Madam. Her reason has recovered its clearness, and she would be entirely over the derangement if she did not have always the fixed idea of wanting to see her mother, to talk with her, and to hope from her the solution of her doubts and her ignorance. All the time that she is free from her religious duties, and some time that she takes from them she spends in the patio where we have our cemetery, and in the garden near by. There, as in our room, the idea of her mother absorbs her whole mind.

Evarista.—Tell me something else. Does she remember Maximo? Does she still think of him?

Dorotea.—Yes, Madam, but in prayer and meditation, her thought cultivates the idea of loving him as a brother, and in the end, as she told me today, she hopes to succeed.

Evarista.—Her thoughts! It is necessary that the heart should respond to this idea. Everything would result very well according to our plans if it were not for the unfortunate occurrence of the day before yesterday which upsets things somewhat . . .

Dorotea.—An unfortunate occurrence!

Evarista.—Our great friend, Don Leonardo Cuesta, the broker, died.

Dorotea.—I did not know . . .

Evarista.—A great misfortune! A few days ago he did not feel very well . . . he foresaw his end. Monday he went out early and in the street he lost consciousness. They took him to his house and he died at three in the afternoon.

Dorotea.—Poor man!

Evarista.—In his will Leonardo makes Electra the heiress of the half of his fortune.

Dorotea.—Ah!

Evarista.—But with the express condition that the child must abandon the religious life. Do you know whether Don Salvador is informed of these things?

Dorotea.—I suppose, since he knows everything, and what he doesn't know he guesses.

Evarista.—That is so.

Dorotea (Seeing DON URBANO coming).—Don Urbano.

SCENE 2

THE SAME; DON URBANO

Evarista.—Have you seen him?*Don Urbano.*—Yes, I left him working in his office, with a skill, with a fixedness of attention that would astonish you. Such a head!*Evarista.*—Has he heard of Cuesta's last will?*Don Urbano.*—Yes.*Evarista* (*To DON URBANO*).—Did you find our friend much vexed?*Don Urbano.*—If he is, no one knows it. His strength of will is such that even in the most distressing conditions he shows in his face the emotions of his great soul . . .*Evarista* (*Interrupting him*).—Indeed, he dominates over human weaknesses and like an eagle rises higher and higher above where the storms break.*Don Urbano.*—When I asked him concerning his hope of retaining Electra, he replied with more calmness than boasting: “I trust in God.”*Evarista.*—What grandeur of soul! Did he know that the Marquis and Maximo are the executors . . . ?*Don Urbano.*—He knew more. He received at noon a letter from them announcing that they would come this afternoon, accompanied by a notary, to ask the girl whether she would accept or refuse the inheritance.*Evarista.*—And in the face of this communication . . .*Don Urbano.*—Nothing . . . The man is so tranquil, repeating the formula which describes him at one stroke: “I trust in God.”

SCENE 3

THE SAME; MAXIMO; THE MARQUIS, *at the left.**Marquis.*—We shall wait here.*Maximo* (*Seeing EVARISTA*).—Ah! Whom have we here? Aunt . . . (*Salutes her with affection.*)*Evarista.*—(*Replying to the salute of the MARQUIS*).—Marquis . . . So after all there are hopes of winning the battle?

Marquis.—I don't know . . . We are struggling with a wild beast of much sagacity.

Evarista.—And you, Maximo, do you think . . . ?

Maximo.—That the monster knows much and is a consummate master in these struggles. But . . . I trust in God.

Evarista.—You, you . . . ?

Maximo.—Naturally; one who loves truth trusts in God. It is for truth that we are fighting. How can we believe that God will abandon us? It cannot be, Aunt.

Don Urbano.—In passing through the patios have you seen Electra?

Maximo.—No.

Dorotea (At the window).—Come in now. She is coming from the cemetery.

Maximo (Going to the window with DON URBANO).—Ah, how sad, how beautiful! The whiteness of her habit makes her look like an apparition. (*Calling to her.*) Electra!

Don Urbano.—Silence.

Maximo.—I cannot contain myself. (*Looks at her again.*) But is she living? Is she in her beautiful reality or is she an image worthy of the altar? . . . Now she is coming back . . . She lifts her eyes to Heaven . . . If I saw her vanish in the air like a shadow, I should not be surprised . . . She lowers her eyes . . . she stops . . . of what is she thinking? (*Continues looking at ELECTRA.*)

Marquis (Who has remained in the proscenium with EVARISTA).—Yes, Madam, false with entire falsehood.

Evarista.—Be careful what you are saying . . .

Marquis.—Either the venerable Don Salvador is mistaken or he has told voluntarily the contrary of the truth, moved by reasons and aims to which our limited intelligence cannot reach.

Evarista.—Impossible, Marquis. A man so righteous, of such high ideals, failing in the truth . . . !

Marquis.—And who can assure you, Madam, that in the depths of these exalted consciences there is not a moral law whose subtleties are far beyond us? There are absurdities in the life of the spirit as well as in nature, where we see a thousand phenomena whose causes are not what they seem to be.

Evarista.—Oh, it cannot be, no, no, no! There are cases in which lying smooths over the paths of goodness. But have we a case of this kind? No, no!

Marquis.—In order that you may form a judgment, listen to what I have to say. Virginia assures me that this man here is the child of Josefina Perret—and she knows it without any mystification or deception. And she proves it as the most clear and simple problem. Moreover I am able to prove that Lazarus Yuste was not in Madrid between the years 63 and 66.

Evarista.—Anyway, Marquis, I cannot get it into my head . . .

Marquis (Seeing PANTOJA appear at the right).—Here he is.

Maximo (Returning to the front of the stage).—The beast is here.

Dorotea.—With permission I will retire. (*Exit to the left.* PANTOJA remains a moment at the door.)

SCENE 4

EVARISTA; MAXIMO; DON URBANO; THE MARQUIS; PANTOJA

Pantoja (Advancing slowly).—Pardon me if I have kept you waiting.

Maximo.—Sir Pantoja, being informed of the object of our visit, it is not necessary to repeat it.

Marquis (Kindly).—We do not repeat it in order not to mortify you, for you will now give the battle up as lost.

Pantoja (Serenely, without boastfulness).—I never lose.

Maximo.—That is saying a great deal.

Pantoja.—And I am certain that Electra knows now how to scorn worldly goods, and will not accept the inheritance.

Maximo (Restraining his wrath).—Oh!

Evarista.—So you see. This man does not surrender.

Pantoja.—I do not surrender . . . never . . . never.

Maximo.—So I see. (*Not able to contain himself.*) He must be killed.

Pantoja.—Let death come.

Marquis.—We shall not go as far as that.

Pantoja.—Go as far as you like, you will always find me at my post, immovable.

Marquis.—We trust in the law.

Pantoja.—I trust in God.

Maximo.—The Law is God . . . or ought to be.

Pantoja.—Ah! Gentlemen of the Law, I tell you that Electra, adapting herself easily to this life of purity, fond now of prayer, and of sweet religious peace, does not desire at all to leave this house.

Maximo (Impatiently).—Shall we be able to see her?

Pantoja.—Not just now.

Maximo (Wishing to protest angrily).—Oh!

Pantoja.—Be calm.

Maximo.—I cannot.

Evarista.—It is the choir hour. Don Salvador means that after prayers . . .

Pantoja.—Exactly . . . And in order that you may be convinced that I have no fear, you may bring not only the notary, but the Congressional deputy if you like. I shall have the doors of the building opened . . . I shall allow you to talk as long as you like with Electra, and if she wishes to leave, let her leave quickly.

Marquis.—You will do as you say?

Pantoja.—Why not, since I trust in God? (*MAXIMO and PANTOJA look at each other in silence.*)

Maximo.—And I, too.

Pantoja.—Well, if you trust, here I await you.

Marquis.—We shall return this afternoon. (*Takes MAXIMO by the arm.*)

Pantoja.—And we to the church. (*Exeunt DON URBANO, EVARISTA, PANTOJA.*)

SCENE 5

THE MARQUIS; MAXIMO, (*who goes agitated about the stage impatient and distrustful.*)

Marquis.—What do you say to this?

Maximo.—That this man of superior talent in charming the weak and jesting with the strong, will drive us all mad. I am not built that way. In struggles of this kind, will against will, I feel myself drawn to violence.

Marquis.—What would you do then?

Maximo.—Take her away willingly or by force. If I haven't enough strength, look for it, acquire it, buy it. Bring friends, accomplices, a squadron, an army (*With increasing heat.*) The romantic ages and the ferocities of feudalism are reborn within me.

Marquis.—And a man of science thinks and talks like that?

Maximo.—Extremes meet. (*More excited.*) This man this monster it is necessary to kill him.

Marquis.—Not quite, my son. Let us imitate him, let us be as cunning, as insidious, as persevering.

Maximo (*With eloquence.*).—Let us be as I am, sincere, brave, valiant. Let us meet the enemy with a bold face. Let us destroy him, if we can, or let ourselves be destroyed by him but all at once, in a single action, in a single onslaught, at one stroke Either him or us.

Marquis.—No, my friend, no. We have to go with a steady hand. It is necessary for us to respect the social order in which we live.

Maximo.—And this social order in which we live will involve us in a network of lies and evasions, and in this net we shall perish drowned, with no defense our hands and our necks caught in the meshes of a thousand and one legal caprices, of a thousand and one false, corrupt intentions.

Marquis.—Be calm. Let us prepare for that which awaits us this afternoon. Let us anticipate the obstacles in order that we may plan how to conquer them. What will happen when we tell Electra that you and she are not brother and sister?

Maximo.—What do you suppose will happen? Why, she will not believe us for in her mind the error has been fixed and it will be impossible to destroy it. Don't you know what continual suggestion can do, what the atmosphere of this house can do with the ideas of those who live in it?

Marquis.—Let us use, then efficient means.

Maximo (*With greater violence.*).—Efficient, yes. Set fire to the house, set fire to Madrid

Marquis.—No nonsense In case the child does not wish to leave we shall take her by force.

Maximo (*Excited to the end.*).—Either conquering force or

conquering despair. I shall die, she will die, we shall all die

Marquis.—Die, no. Let us live, wide awake. Let us prepare for the worst. I have the keys to get into the new street. Sister Dorotea is on our side . . . Hush.

Maximo.—On to violence!

Marquis.—Astuteness, cunning!

Maximo.—By the straight road!

Marquis.—By the indirect road! (*Taking his arm.*)
And let us go, for our presence here may arouse suspicions.
(*Taking him away.*)

Maximo.—Let us go, yes.

Marquis.—Trust in me.

Maximo.—I trust in God.

CHANGE OF SCENE

Patio in San José de la Penitencia. At the right the side of a church, with windows through which the light comes. At the left a door leading to another patio, which communicates with the street. In the background between the church and the buildings on the left a great arch, through which one can see the border of the cemetery of the Congregation. Dark night.

SCENE 6

ELECTRA; DOROTEA

Dorotea.—As certain as that it is night, two gentlemen have come to the house with the proposition to take you out into the world. Don't you believe it?

Electra.—Two gentlemen? Before you tell me their names, my heart guesses them: Maximo and the Marquis of Ronda. If it is true that they wish to take me with them they disturb me very much. When I came into this holy house I began, as you know, the great battle with my spirit. I have tried with the help of God to change into brotherly love the love of a very different kind that fills my heart. That fire of the sun having been kindled in my heart with such violence, it is not an easy task to change it into the cool

light of the moon . . . But in the end by continual meditation, the dismay of my heart and the sweet ideas that God has sent me have given me strength to conquer in the battle.

Dorotea.—My sister, if you feel in you the strength of the new love, why do you fear to see Maximo?

Electra.—Because seeing him, I think that all the ground gained will be lost in a single moment.

Dorotea (Incredulously).—And are you sure that you have gained this ground?

Electra.—Oh yes, some . . . not much yet . . .

Dorotea.—I understand, my dear sister, that seeing the person will help you to prove it, if indeed you can . . .

Electra (With vivacity).—Oh, don't say it . . . As I am today in the beginning of the struggle my conscience would not have a moment's peace by his side. Oh, my God, I am struggling with two impossibilities—I cannot love him as a brother, and I cannot love him as a husband. (*Terrified.*) What torture in the world, no . . . I prefer to be here in this solitude of death, in this laboratory of my soul, and by this divine crucible in which I am fusing a new being . . .

Dorotea.—Do not hope, Electra, that your own ideas will give you peace. Trust in God and in those whom God sends you. (*With resolution.*) My sister, do not tremble before him whom you believe your brother. Some one, perhaps, will deny that he is.

Electra (Very excited).—Be still, be still . . . In an affair so delicate, every word that does not bring me certainty is a cruel word, which does not calm me, but drives me crazy . . . My God, give me the truth or give me death!

Dorotea.—Calm yourself . . .

Electra (More excited).—All the confusion I had when I came here is coming back again . . . Angels and demons are struggling in my thoughts . . . Leave me . . . I wish to flee from myself . . . (*Goes up and down on the stage in great agitation.* SISTER DOROTEA goes after her and tries to calm her.)

Dorotea.—Calm yourself . . . do . . . my dear sister, your torments are near their end. (*Looks anxiously towards the door on the left.*)

Electra (Thinking she hears voices in the distance).—Listen . . . my mother calls me . . .

Dorotea.—Do not become delirious . . . Other voices, voices of living persons will call you.

Electra.—It is my mother . . . Silence! (*Listening.*
Enter PANTOJA at the left.)

SCENE 7

ELECTRA; PANTOJA; DOROTEA

Pantoja.—My daughter, how did you get out of the church without my seeing you?

Dorotea.—We went out to get some fresh air. Electra was stifling. (*Aside.*) The hour approaches . . . God will help us . . .

Pantoja.—My daughter, do you not feel well?

Electra (*In a fearful voice.*).—My mother is calling me.

Pantoja (*Taking her hand affectionately.*).—The sweet voice of your mother, speaking to you in the spirit, will comfort you, will bind you with bonds of piety and love to this holy house. (*The choir of novices is heard in the church.*) Listen, my daughter, these voices of the angels which are calling to you from Heaven.

Electra (*Delirious.*).—It is the song of the choir. Between these tender voices there rises that of my mother calling me to her tomb.

Pantoja.—It is an hallucination. It is the voice of the heavenly angels.

Electra.—There are no angels, no, no . . . I hear my name, I hear the voices of the choir which stir my whole soul. They are the sons of men who rejoice in life. (*She continues to hear the voices of the choir.*)

Pantoja (*Uneasily.*).—Sister Dorotea, tell the Sister Custodian that she should watch the door of the new street and that of Ronda street.

Dorotea.—I will, sir.

Pantoja.—No, I will go . . . I trust no one . . . I wish to watch the doors, all the patios and corners of the building. (*Alarmed, thinking he hears a noise.*) Silence . . . Don't you hear . . . ?

Dorotea.—What? . . . Nothing, sir. It is fear.

Pantoja.—I thought I heard the sound of voices . . . knocks at some door down below. (*Listens.*)

Dorotea.—In what direction? (*Looking towards the rear behind the church.*)

Pantoja.—In the direction of the Infirmary. Oh, I have no peace. I wish to see for myself. Electra, go back to the church . . . Sister, you take her . . . They are waiting for me there . . . (*Hurrying them.*) Quick . . . (*Takes them to the door of the church. Goes quickly and uneasily. DOROTEA sees him leave, takes ELECTRA's hand and returns with her to the center of the stage. ELECTRA, as if powerless, lets herself be led.*)

SCENE 8

ELECTRA; DOROTEA

Dorotea.—They are coming—not to the church, though.

Electra.—Here . . . I want to get my breath . . . I want to live.

Dorotea (Aside, uneasy).—This is the hour set for the Marquis . . . Let us take advantage of the minutes, of the seconds or all will be lost. (*Looking to the left.*) I am going to open their way to this patio . . . (*Aloud.*) Sister, wait for me here.

Electra (Frightened).—Where are you going? (*Seizes her hand.*)

Dorotea (Decisively).—To look out for you, to return to you your health and life . . . To arrange for you to leave this tomb, and to take me with you . . .

Electra (Trembling).—Sister, do not leave me.

Dorotea.—This moment will decide your fate. You will return to the world . . . You will see Maximo.

Electra.—When?

Dorotea.—Now . . . You will see him enter here . . . (*Pointing to the left.*) Silence . . . courage . . . Do not stop me . . . Do not move from here . . . (*Goes quickly out at the left.*)

Electra.—Oh, my God, Holy Virgin! Is it true that . . . ? Here . . . he is coming here? (*Thinks she sees MAXIMO in the darkness.*) Ah! It is he! Maximo

. . . (Speaking as in a dream she moves away from what she thinks is a real being.) Away from me . . . leave me . . . I cannot love you as a brother. . . . I cannot . . . In the fire is the crucible in which I wished to fuse a new heart . . . Don't you see that I cannot look at you? Why are you looking at me? Do not take me out into the world. Here I am seeking truth. My mother is calling me. (With accents of despair.) Mother! Mother! (Turns her face to the rear. As the last words of ELECTRA are spoken, there appears the Shade of ELEUTERIA, a beautiful figure dressed as a nun. ELECTRA, her back to the audience, with her arms crossed, looks at her.) Oh! (A long pause.)

SCENE 9

ELECTRA; THE SHADE OF ELEUTERIA, (which is seen vaguely in the darkness in the background. ELECTRA advances towards it. The figures remain facing each other as near as possible.)

The Shade.—I am your mother and I come to calm the anxieties of your loving heart. My voice will give back peace to your conscience. No bond of nature unites you to the man you have chosen for a husband. That which you heard was an invention dictated by affection to bring you into our company and to the peace of this holy house.

Electra.—Oh, Mother, what consolation you give me.

The Shade.—I am telling you the truth and I give it strength and hope. Accept, my daughter, as a test of the temple of your heart, this transitory seclusion, and do not bear ill-will to those who brought you here . . . if marital love and the pleasures of the family call your soul, allow yourself to leave this sweet attraction and do not pretend to a holiness that you cannot attain. God is in all parts . . . I did not know how to find Him outside of here . . . Seek him in the world along paths better than were mine, and . . . (The SHADE is silent and disappears as the voice of MAXIMO is heard.)

LAST SCENE

ELECTRA; MAXIMO; THE MARQUIS; DOROTEA; PANTOJA

Maximo (In the door).—Electra!

Electra (Running towards him).—Ah!

Pantoja (At the right).—My daughter, where are you?

Marquis.—Here with us.

Maximo.—She is ours.

Pantoja.—Are you running away from me?

Maximo.—No, she is not running away . . . She has come to life.

THE CLAWS

(*La Garra*)

A Drama in Two Acts and in Prose

BY MANUEL LINARES RIVAS

Played for the first time in the Teatro de la Princesa of Madrid, December 21, 1914

CAST OF CHARACTERS

- SOL DE SAN PAYO, marchioness of Montrove.
- DOÑA ESPERANZA ESPIÑEIRA, her mother.
- SANTA SAN PAYO, cousin of Sol.
- PRIMITIVA, an old servant.
- PILUCA.
- DOÑA TADEA, her mother.
- MARIQUÍNA.
- DOÑA URSULA, her mother.
- PACA, a young servant.
- THE MARQUIS OF MONTROVE.
- THE CARDINAL ESPIÑEIRA, prelate of Campanela.
- ALVARO DEL REAL, commandant of cavalry.
- DON TIRSO, father of Sol.
- DON ACISCLO, president of the Court.
- DON ANTERO, doctor of the S. I. M.
- FATHER MUIÑOS.
- MARCELO.
- A VALET OF THE CARDINAL.

The action takes place in Campanela, a city dead like Bruges, like Salamanca, like Toledo, like Santiago . . .

Time is the present.

ACT I

A spacious hall in a large house, with high ceiling, heavy walls and with strong doors of carved walnut. The hangings

were once rather showy, but time has softened their color; the furniture in the classic style, is plentiful, solid and rich; the pictures few, large and of religious subjects, have dark backgrounds and the gold of the frames tarnished; on a table with a marble top, a reproduction of a wayside shrine with four steps, a group of the DOLOROSA with Christ in her lap, and then the cross with broad, short arms; a small show case, with objects of glass. On the back wall a large picture of the CARDINAL ESPIÑEIRA, cousin of the owners of the house, and present prelate of CAMPANELA. In a corner another glass case. The floor is of wood; on the rug a bronze brazier. A large chandelier, provided with candles which are not lighted. Some electric lights, which contrast, since they are elegant and modern, with the severe and musty atmosphere of the hall. Convenience, conquering and pushing aside severity, shows once more that of all times the present is the best

It is night; in April. It is raining.

SCENE I

TADEA and URSULA

(Seated on low reed chairs they are sewing on hoods and masks. At their side another small chair, with a dress for a masquerade ball, hanging over the seat as if some one had stopped work for a moment.)

Primitiva (Standing; a pause, working).—This is going to be very pretty, Doña Tadea.

Tadea.—I hope so, Primitiva.

Ursula.—If anyone had told us a month ago that we should be preparing the dresses of our daughters for the masquerade ball for this evening . . . what would we have said?

Primitiva.—Certainly you would have denied it.

Ursula.—Certainly. And yet, it is so

Tadea.—When you let your Mariquiña go, and I my Piluca, we surely have a reason.

Ursula.—Many of them. You see, it isn't time for the public balls, consequently no one can imagine that it is a question of trying to find some extemporaneous diversion.

Tadea.—Exactly. Pass me the wax, please.

Ursula.—Then the desire to raise funds to keep up the holy institution for Night Refuge inclined the mind of His Eminence to authorize it.

Tadea.—Exactly. And His Eminence, how is he?

Primitiva.—Very well, indeed.

Tadea.—I sent him last Friday some sweetmeats that my Piluca made.

Primitiva.—They must have been fine. What a hand your daughter has for making dainties! . . . Well, she comes by it naturally.

Tadea.—She beats me, Primitiva, she beats me.

Primitiva.—That's enough to say in praise of her skill!

Tadea.—Thank you, thank you. Here's the wax, Ursula, and I beg your pardon. Go on . . .

Ursula. . . . And we couldn't refuse when the Marchioness of Montrove arranges the festival and the best people of Campanela are going.

Tadea.—Exactly, exactly, madam.

Ursula.—An enterprise that originates in this house can't help but be praiseworthy, and considering all the good qualities of the Marchioness and the many more of her mother, who on top of all is the first cousin of our beloved Prelate, one can't conceive of even a shade of sin in her ideas.

Primitiva.—Well, the old lady grumbles a bit . . .

Tadea.—Of course. She would prefer that they should raise the money in some other way, but the faithful are a little slow and there is nothing else to do but seek for alms with timbrels and bells.

Ursula.—That's it exactly.

Tadea.—But we can have easy consciences. There is no doubt that it is the permission of God when the Cardinal authorizes it, but we have to confess that it seems like a thing of the devil.

Primitiva.—Oh, don't mention him, Doña Tadea, for it is Saturday and he is loose!

Tadea.—You are right.

Primitiva.—Better conjure him away, perhaps.

Tadea, Ursula, Primitiva (All together).—Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! (And the three, after having pronounced the name slowly and distinctly, cross themselves.)

Primitiva.—It is well to keep him at bay, for the enemy is

a busybody, and Saturdays, when he has permission to do his evil deeds, are dangerous times.

Ursula.—That is true.

Tadea.—Yes, it is true. Pass me the wax, Doña Ursula, for the thread is bewitched and knots itself every minute.

SCENE 2

THE SAME and FATHER MUIÑOS, (*at the back.*)

Father Muiños.—Good evening.

Primitiva.—Good evening.

Tadea.—Is it raining?

Father Muiños.—Yes, it is raining, madam.

Primitiva.—Why, who would know you, Father Muiños? . . . A new cloak . . . And a new cassock! Oh, what a lot of money they must have cost!

Father Muiños.—A lot, a lot . . .

Primitiva.—Did they make them at Longeira's?

Father Muiños.—No, no. They might have, for she never spares anything, this kind lady, Madam Soledad de San Payo, Marchioness of Montrove, whom her intimates call by the dazzling abbreviation of Sol, (*) and we poor ones call our sun and benediction, our angel and our lady.

Primitiva.—Doña Soledad bought it? Why, she didn't tell me about it.

Father Muiños.—She always does two favors at the same time: that of doing it and that of not telling about it. But it is for me to proclaim the debt.

Primitiva.—My master and mistress are very good, don't you think so?

Father Muiños.—This house is the favored one of the Lord. If it were still the age for creating thrones, there would come out from here kings and princes, anointed by the grace of God.

Primitiva.—I don't say that they should be kings nor queens . . .

Father Muiños.—Nor I; I say that they deserve to be.

Primitiva.—Oh, yes, indeed, sir!

Father Muiños.—Doña Esperanza is the worthy com-

*“Sol”—Sun.

panion of the Patriarch Don Tirso de San Payo; the Marquis an honorable and loyal gentleman; the little ones, two little angels, who already show at their nine and ten years of age, the generous race from which they come, and the Marchioness, like the strong woman of the Holy Scriptures, perpetuates her name and race, ennobles it, and glorifies God in herself and in her family.

Tadea.—Exactly, Father Muiños—the hand of God is to be seen here. Give me that cursed wax, Doña Ursula?

Ursula.—Keep it. And what prank is this, Father Muiños, for you are not accustomed to being out late at night?

Primitiva.—Probably they have just given him the new clothes and he has come to show them off . . .

Father Muiños.—No, no. It is because the Cardinal Archbishop is coming here today, and since they do not allow me access to the Palace, the Marchioness wished to grant this opportunity of speaking to him . . .

Primitiva.—To see if they will give you a parish, man!

Father Muiños.—I do not ask so much. That they may give me permission to preach and say mass again . . . and earn my living. It is not fitting that my poverty should go always seeking charity.

Tadea.—And you dressed yourself up so fine for the interview, eh?

Father Muiños.—Yes, for that, madam, for that. It wouldn't be suitable for me to present myself before His Eminence all threadbare and dirty . . . It wouldn't be suitable, not even to talk to him about the misery and hunger that I suffer unjustly!

(URSULA and TADEA look at each other, lower their heads and continue working. A pause.)

Ursula.—Sit down, Father . . .

SCENE III

THE SAME and SANTA, (at the right.)

Santa.—Hello, Father Muiños.

Father Muiños.—Good evening, Doña Santa.

Santa.—Primitiva, go as quickly as you can and take

these two tickets, that they have sent for from Don Victorio's.

Primitiva.—Am I to go through the streets at night?

Santa.—The two boys are going on errands, too. Go on, you'll not be eaten up by any gallant.

Primitiva.—I wasn't afraid when I had cause to, so now, imagine! . . . But go alone at the hour of the Animas!

Santa.—Pray a *Pater Noster*.—

Primitiva.—I was just doing it . . . but as I am to take some tickets of this kind, and it is Saturday. . . . I really am afraid, Doña Santa!

Santa.—Quickly, quickly, for it is urgent.

Primitiva.—All right. (*Loitering somewhat, she goes out at the back.*)

Santa (Sitting down to sew).—Is it raining, Father Muiños?

Father Muiños.—Yes, it is raining, madam.

Tadea.—And the Marchioness?

Santa.—Dressing.

Tadea.—The dress they sent her from Paris?

Santa.—That's why she sent for it.

Ursula.—Mariquiña told me that it is very low in the neck.

Santa.—A little.

Ursula.—We'll see what that "little" means, for every kind of scandalous thing comes from Paris . . .

Santa.—Come here, Father. The Archbishop has already spoken; so if you just say a few words of respect, he will pardon you.

Father Muiños.—I will say them.

Santa (Always kindly).—And don't go back to your old habits, for now you see the consequences.

Father Muiños.—I shall not, no. That is to say, I don't want to cause any annoyance to His Eminence nor to anyone . . . But who can answer for me, even to myself, when my great stupidity consists in imagining that I am preaching the truth?

Tadea.—There must not be much truth in it when they admonish you for it.

Father Muiños.—Certainly, yes, madam; and I humbly recognize that the truth is theirs—that of my chiefs and superiors; that in this great army of Christ, in which we are all equal, the right proceeds from dignitaries and from hierarchies . . .

Santa.—See here, Father Muiños, see here; ask for pardon without comments, and try not to discuss anything, you know?

Father Muiños.—I shall do it, for I have decided to . . . but sometimes it happens to me to discuss when I don't wish to.

Santa.—Then you must correct yourself, for it is better so.

Father Muiños.—I know that perfectly. (*Sadly.*) When I put on this cassock . . . —not this one, the other, the threadbare and shiny one! . . . —I used to think that my voice ought to lift itself up against the injustices of the world; and if men were unjust, against men I should have the right; if the law were unjust, against the law my voice would prevail . . .

Santa.—Don't discuss, don't discuss . . .

Father Muiños (Smiling).—It is a vice . . . I know it. And now I know that in order to keep this cassock—this one, the new one . . . —I shall do better to change the tone of my voice and the echo of my ideas . . .

Ursula (Aside to SANTA).—He is a good man, but ungovernable. The Magistrate says so, and when the Magistrate says a thing, there is no mistake.

Santa.—Maybe so . . . Do it, Father Muiños.

Father Muiños.—I shall. And voices and ideas and convictions, all will go into the arcanum of secrets, and I shall lock this arcanum with seven locks and seven keys

Tadea.—And you will see how well you will get along without this weight.

Father Muiños.—Yes, madam; yes, madam.

SCENE IV

THE SAME and DOÑA ESPERANZA, (*at the left.*)

Esperanza.—Aren't they finished?

Ursula.—Just a few stitches . . .

Tadea.—And the grandchildren?

Esperanza.—There is no way to get them to sleep . . . They are excited with curiosity to see the costumes.

Santa.—That is natural . . .

Esperanza (To FATHER MUIÑOS).—Does it seem the same to you, too?

Father Muiños.—Yes, madam . . . (*Correcting himself at once.*) No, madam.

Esperanza.—In order that you may know what to expect, bear in mind that my cousin, the Cardinal Archbishop, tolerates this ball, tolerates it, that's all. Do you understand? I insist that tonight they hear his exhortations and that they fast tomorrow, preparing to confess and be received the day after tomorrow.

Father Muiños.—That seems to me very proper.

Esperanza.—And as for yourself, he will pardon you at my request and because I have vouched for your correctness in the future.

Father Muiños.—Doña Esperanza, I was always conformable to the rules.

Esperanza.—Ungovernable. The Magistrate qualified it thus . . . but I still trust that you will do honor to the generosity of your Prelate and the affection of those of us who have vouched for you.

Father Muiños.—Yes, madam.

Esperanza.—Tirso wishes to say the same thing to you.

Father Muiños.—I shall be glad to listen to him. Is this his office? May I go in? (*Exit at the left.*)

SCENE V

THE SAME; except FATHER MUIÑOS; then PACA, (at the left.)

Esperanza.—If he had been docile we should already have made him a canon, for he is good and clever; but this rebelliousness of his speech ruins him, really ruins him.

Ursula.—Really.

Paca.—Madam, the young ladies are asking for you.

Esperanza.—They just will not sleep. The enemy is in the house. (*ESPERANZA and the girl go out at the left.*)

Ursula.—Have you finished, Doña Tadea? Let's go and try them on the girls!

Tadea.—All right. And you?

Santa.—In just a few minutes I'll go, too. But don't

go into Sol's room; she wishes to surprise us with her dress.

Tadea.—All right. (*They gather up their work and go out at the right.*)

SCENE VI

SANTA (*A pause.*)

ALVARO (*In uniform, at the back.*)

Alvaro (*From the door, in a low voice.*).—Good evening, Santa.

Santa (*Smiling, but without raising her head.*).—I am working.

Alvaro.—Very good. (*Pause.*)

Santa (*Fearing the silence.*).—Is it raining?

Alvaro.—It is raining.

Santa.—As always in Campanela . . . (*Pause.*)

Alvaro.—Aren't your aunt and uncle at home? . . .

Santa.—Yes, yes; we are all here.

Alvaro (*Approaching slowly*).—Santa . . .

Santa.—Oh!

Alvaro.—What is the matter?

Santa.—A prick . . . nothing.

Alvaro.—God is so kind as to grant me a few minutes alone with you. You know very well that I do not seek them, on the contrary, I avoid them . . . but when God is so good, do you not wish it, Santa?

Santa.—What for? . . . If I had to choose between your friendship and that of the others, of all of them together, I should choose yours. You are convinced of that, aren't you?

Alvaro.—And I would give everything for you. Position, career, fortune, name, all to win your affection. You are convinced of that, aren't you?

Santa.—But it is impossible . . .

Alvaro.—Always impossible!

Santa.—Always . . .

Alvaro.—But you know very well how absurd it is to be eternally waiting for someone who never comes and never will come?

Santa.—It is a great fatality! It is an enormous in-

justice! To see myself bound to a husband who scorned me, who robbed me of my little fortune; and from whom I have not heard for ten years whether he is alive or dead . . . It is an absurd bond! . . . entirely absurd . . . but it is a bond . . . and I am bound!

Alvaro.—Break it!

Santa.—How?

Alvaro.—Coming to me!

Santa.—Illegally? Not that! I am very unhappy, I have a horrible fear, frightful, lest some day I might need the protection of these relatives; I believe in you absolutely, blindly, without any doubt whatever . . . But I cannot deny my conscience! Not that, no!

Alvaro.—And of what guilt could your conscience accuse you? Ten years have passed . . . ten years! Without a word, good or bad, without a word from this man, who is probably now rotting in some place where his evil deeds and his adventures have carried him . . . It seems to me that the period of resignation has been long enough for your conscience to be perfectly at ease, and for other people's consciences to justify you and absolve you in the future.

Santa.—No, Alvaro, no. Unless the law releases me I shall never contract another tie.

Alvaro.—The law? But the law demands a material proof . . . And what if you haven't it?

Santa.—Isn't there what they call a presumption of death?

Alvaro.—Yes, there is, yes . . . But do you know the length of time the law requires in order to declare a presumption of death on account of absence?

Santa.—Very long?

Alvaro.—Thirty years!

Santa.—Thirty years!

Alvaro.—And do you think there is any justice, any right, or any reason in saying to a woman of thirty years that she should wait another thirty years before she can think of beginning again her life, which has been ruined through the fault of another? . . . Do you not see the absurdity of waiting until old age to have a bit of the happiness of youth?

Santa (Resigned).—Then I shall never have it.

Alvaro.—But it is a crime against your own nature, against life, against common sense . . .

Santa.—That is true, but I shall never have it.

Alvaro.—Come, come, Santa!

Santa.—No.

Alvaro.—Santa!

Santa.—No!

Alvaro.—Santa!

Santa.—No!

Alvaro.—But it is absurd!

Santa.—Yes.

Alvaro.—And monstrous.

Santa.—Yes.

Alvaro.—And hopeless.

Santa.—Yes.

Alvaro.—And comprehending that . . .

Santa (Stopping him).—No! No! No! (She sits down, takes up her work, but overcome bursts out crying, covering her head with the costume.)

Alvaro (Vexed).—All right. We shall go on with the absurd hope for years and centuries . . . but these tears of today, and those of tomorrow, do not charge them to misfortune, but charge them to useless cowardice.

Santa (Getting up quickly).—Alvaro! It cannot be! That man lives!

Alvaro.—Do you know it?

Santa.—No, I do not know it. But if he were dead, God would have told it to me in some revelation.

Alvaro.—No! Since God did not reveal to you before that you were going to marry a knave and a thief, do not wait now for any revelation.

Santa (Frightened).—Alvaro!!

Alvaro (Going).—Santa! Oh, my dear Santa! . . .

Santa (Drawing back).—No!

Alvaro (Excited with indignation).—Well, no then! (Pause. Forcing a smile.) Is Don Tirso in? . . . With your permission I am going to see him. (Exit slowly to the left. SANTA weeps, uncovering her face quickly on hearing someone enter.)

SCENE VII

SANTA, URSULA and TADEA, (*at the right.*)

Ursula.—What is the matter?

Santa (Trying to smile).—I pricked myself . . .

Ursula.—Let's see . . .

Tadea.—With whom were you talking?

Santa.—With Cousin Alvaro . . .

Tadea.—Don't look at the finger any more, Doña Ursula. Be careful, Santita, for the Evil One is always lying in wait for a weakness.

Santa.—There is no danger.

Tadea.—Because I know very well your seriousness, for that very reason I say to you, beware of the hour of the devil, for you live much in need of affection and the Commandant has been filled with adoration these three years . . . so with this is plenty of fuel for a big fire.

Santa.—He is a friend, nothing more than a friend

Tadea.—Give him any name you please, but be careful. Tadea gives you some good advice.

SCENE VIII

THE SAME and ESPERANZA, (*at the left.*)

Esperanza.—What advice are you giving her?

Tadea.—Nothing . . .

Esperanza.—I am sorry that in my house you talk of things that I may not know.

Ursula.—Oh, no! Just that Doña Santa and Cousin Alvaro were talking a bit, and we were telling her, so to speak, that she shouldn't listen . . .

Esperanza.—Were you talking?

Santa.—Yes . . .

Esperanza.—The most prudent thing is for you not to go to the ball: removing the opportunity, you remove the danger. Say that you have a headache . . .

Santa.—I will say so . . . (*Picks up her work and goes out with URSULA, to the right.*)

SCENE IX

THE SAME: THE MARQUIS OF MONTROVE, (*in evening dress, at the right.*)

Tadea.—You are dressed already? . . .

Marquis.—So it seems . . .

Tadea.—You are going to have a fine time today!

Marquis.—I don't think so. I am glad to go because Sol has taken a fancy to go.

Tadea.—A good husband you are . . . You see in Campanela they cite them as examples, "happy and fortunate as the Marquis and Marchioness of Montrove" . . .

Marquis.—And we are.

Tadea.—May you long remain so! . . . (*Exit to the right.*)

Marquis.—Thank you.

SCENE X

DOÑA ESPERANZA, MARQUIS, TIRSO, ACISCLO, ALVARO and FATHER MUIÑOS, (*at the left, bows.*)

Marquis.—What is the matter with Father Muiños?

Tirso.—We have persuaded him. When a Magistrate as respectable as Don Acisclo, all knowledge and all prudence, exhorts him in the same terms as the rest of us, we must be right.

Father Muiños.—And I thank you, my good Don Tirso, for your affectionate admonitions, as well as the Judge.

Acisclo.—They asked me about it and I gave my loyal opinion. It is not that I disapprove of all your words and all your opinions, no, sir, but I say that in any organization the judgment of the inferior cannot prevail, for that would be the destruction of the social edifice.

Father Muiños.—Evidently . . .

Acisclo.—Perhaps you do not believe there is any law that I consider, I, personally, as inefficient, as inadequate, as unjust, perhaps? . . . Why yes, indeed, sir, there are, and yet, when the occasion arises I apply them to their full extent and in all their severity.

Father Muiños.—Is there ever an opportunity to apply an unjust law?

Esperanza (Indignant).—Father Muiños!

Acisclo.—I will reply to him. Yes, sir, there is. And why is there? Because my personal judgment as President of the Court cannot put itself above the definite judgment of the Supreme Court; because it is necessary that my personal opinion should disappear and should be void before the text of the standing law.

Father Muiños.—*Dura lex.*

Acisclo.—*Sed lex.* Exactly. That which I can do and what I do, is to inform my superiors and the Legal Commission concerning all the defects that I observe in practice, in order that they may correct and rectify them as they should . . . but as long as they are not rectified by authority I continue and I shall continue to apply the law in its entirety.

Marquis.—That is one criterion, yes . . . *not now*

Tirso.—The only one. Is the *commandant* going to dispute the order of his colonel? Is the judge going to refuse to comply with the mandates of the court? Is the parish priest going to interpret the rules of his bishop? No! Evidently not! And this is order, this is life . . .

Alvaro.—The social order, yes; life, no, Don Tirso, no

Tirso.—How is that? How is that?

Esperanza.—Do not begin to reply as a soldier, Alvaro!

Alvaro (Going).—No, Aunt Esperanza, no . . .

Father Muiños (Aside to the MARQUIS).—That which they defend, as if there were nothing else to defend, is the discipline of individuals, the military roster of ideas, that is to imprison life and to put a padlock on the intelligences of all who are not chiefs or primates . . .

Marquis.—Not so loud, Father Muiños, not so loud. The houses have ears and the streets are like trumpets that carry the echo to too many places . . . and today they are intending to pardon you.

Father Muiños.—Certainly, certainly. These gentlemen are quite right.

Esperanza (Continuing her conversation with ALVARO).—It would be better for us not to talk of anything, for it would grieve me very much to think that a gentleman, and my

nephew, should try to disturb the peace of an honest lady.

Alvaro.—Do you refer to Santa?

Esperanza.—I don't know to whom I refer.

Alvaro.—Don't worry about her, for she is so severe, so inflexible . . . so foolish!

Esperanza.—Alvaro!

Alvaro (Correcting himself).—So foolish is my ambition that I shall never realize it.

Esperanza.—I have no doubt at all of her, but it does not please me even that she should be obliged to refuse. Do not forget that, if you value at all the affection with which we receive you in this house. (*ALVARO bows without replying.*)

Marquis.—And the little ones?

Esperanza.—They are asleep, but restless. They wake up every other minute . . .

Alvaro (Aside to FATHER MUIÑOS).—Father Muiños, the cruelty of the happy is horrible . . . !

Father Muiños.—I know that already . . . Why do you say it now, Don Alvaro?

Alvaro.—Just as the Judge, to his suits and his cases, Aunt Esperanza applies to the passions and the affections the same implacable law, severe and direct . . .

Father Muiños.—It is necessary to excuse them. They are very high up . . . and any rebellion, not yet reaching up to them, becomes an offense in the minds of those who live very well and pleasantly in the high places of the world.

Alvaro.—I am not talking of myself nor of the longing that I may feel for that woman . . . But it is an injustice, such a great injustice that they show to this poor Santa! . . .

Father Muiños.—It is an injustice? Well, we shall place it by the side of the many others for which there is no remedy.

Alvaro.—I shall struggle to save her!

Father Muiños.—Don't, Don Alvaro, don't. God will come when the heap reaches up to Heaven and then Heaven will take pity and will burn all these injustices together at one time!

Alvaro.—It will do well, but as long as it does not I shall continue carrying my fire to Santa and to her misfortune.

Father Muiños.—Perhaps you know . . .

SCENE XI

THE SAME: PILUCA, then SOL, SANTA, URСSULA, TADEA and MARIQUИНА, (*at the right.*)

Piluca.—Doña Esperanza . . .

Esperanza.—What do you wish, Piluca?

Piluca.—I come as an ambassadress. (*Assuming grand airs.*) Doña Sol de San Payo y de Espiñeira, Marchioness de Montrove, asks if your Graces will receive her—her and her Paris dress, from *chez Paquin*.

Marquis (*Smiling, and continuing the jest.*).—What do you decide? Shall we receive her and her dress?

Esperanza.—Let's see what it is . . .

Marquis (*Assuming a grand air.*).—Let Sol enter.

Father Muiños.—The, the . . .

Marquis.—We shall say it as you like. Let the Sun enter, then. (*Exit PILUCA; she returns at once with the others.*)

Acisclo.—Bravo!~

Father Muiños.—Very pretty.

Alvaro.—A jewel of a dress.

Sol.—Really?

Marquis.—A marvel.

Sol.—Do you like it?

Tirso.—What do you say?

Esperanza.—I say that it seems to be scandalously extreme.

Sol.—Stop! I counted on that, Mama. (*Assuming a grand air.*) Come to me, pages and maids! (*SANTA, PILUCA and MARIQUИНА approach her with a piece of chiffon, a paper of pins and a box of safety pins.*) And you may fill it in as you like.

Esperanza.—Higher, higher . . . So.

Sol.—Paris dress, now you are changed into a Campanela dress. (*While SANTA and the girls change the low-neck dress into a high-neck one, they go on talking.*)

Alvaro.—But it is still most charming.

Sol.—And more protection; the health gains by that.

Esperanza.—And propriety.

Father Muiños (*Aside to the MARQUIS.*).—If it were only that easy to change ideas . . .

Sol.—Your honor . . .

Acisclo.—Marchioness . . .

Sol.—As you see, we have brought more chiffon than we need. What is left over I am going to send to you.

Acisclo.—To me? Why?

Sol.—For your verdicts. It seems to me some of them would be better if they were veiled a little.

Acisclo.—You are right . . . and so are we, too. Many times we use harsh expressions, but graphic ones, with respect to truth and justice, for really one cannot get along with ambiguities when it is a question of the life and liberty of individuals.

Sol.—Now you are my Don Acisclo. When a life is at stake it is fitting to speak very clearly, very exactly and very decidedly, without caring at all whether an idea or a resolution scandalizes the others.

Esperanza.—Don't say that, for the opinion of others

Sol (*Interrupting her*).—In small things? No doubt of it! In small things the opinion of others should be one's own opinion. Shall we put in some more chiffon?

Esperanza (*Sharply*).—No.

Father Muiños.—I agree with you, Madam Marchioness, renouncing my own convictions . . .

Esperanza.—You are a rebel, Father Muiños.

Tirso.—An ungovernable one.

Esperanza.—And I am much afraid that we may have to repent the favor we are doing you today.

Father Muiños.—Madam . . .

Tirso.—We are much afraid of it.

Father Muiños.—Don Tirso . . .

Sol.—Don't torment him! He is an honorable man, an exemplary priest . . .

Tirso.—Nobody blames his conduct, but his words.

Sol.—Against religion?

Tirso and Esperanza (*At the same time*).—No.

Father Muiños.—Against the dogma? If my lips had spoken heresy, rather than that I should receive excommunication, I should have myself placed a red-hot iron on my lips!

Marquis (*Embracing him*).—They do not accuse you of that, no . . .

Sol.—They say that you speak with a certain severity of the procedures and methods of some of your superiors?

Esperanza.—Do you think that is not enough?

Sol.—I do not encourage him to continue the struggle: on the contrary, I would dissuade him from it and I advise him to yield, to compromise, to adjust himself . . . but alone between him and ourselves I am far from calling him a rebel because he defends a miserable bit of bread with a little energy!

Tirso.—That is encouraging him!

Sol.—No, Father, no, why should it be!

Father Muiños (Aside to the MARQUIS).—When she speaks, it is for me as if there dawned a new day of kindness . . .

Marquis.—Well you deserve . . .

Father Muiños.—May God repay her . . . And I, too, when God permits it!

Santa.—It is all right now.

Sol.—Well, dress yourselves, for it is nearly time.
(*URSULA, TADEA, PILUCA and MARIQUIÑA go out at the right.*)

Acisclo.—All of the Court are going, including the Clerk.

Alvaro.—And of my corps even the officer of the guard has bought his ticket.

Sol.—Many thanks in the name of the poor . . . and in my own. Come, Santa, come!

Santa.—I am not going to the ball . . . I have a severe headache . . .

Sol.—Take some aspirin . . . and go dress.

Santa.—No . . . Excuse me if I do not go with you.

Sol.—Have they forbidden you?

Santa.—No, no . . .

Sol.—Well then . . . (*Interrupting her.*) Have you a fever?

Santa.—No, neuralgia, nothing more.

Sol.—Well then, go and dress, Santa; I beg you . . .

Esperanza.—If you are all right now . . . go and dress, yes . . . (*Exit SANTA to the right.*)

SCENE XII

SOL, ESPERANZA, TIRSO, MARQUIS, ALVARO, FATHER MUIÑOS and ACISCLO

Tirso.—You did wrong to make her go.

Sol.—I didn't make her. I know positively that she had a great desire to go with me—someone must have taken this desire from her and given her that headache . . . in which I don't believe.

Esperanza.—For very strong reasons.

Sol.—I don't deny it, mother. But this poor Santa bears her burden continually and it is very cruel to deprive her of this change.

Esperanza.—Am I the cruel one?

Sol.—Your will, no; your intentions, no . . . but your commands, sometimes are.

Tirso.—I suppose you will hardly chide your mother?

Sol.—No! (*Embracing both of them at once*).—And if you have seen in my words anything lacking in respect, I ask your pardon, your pardon a thousand times. But I cannot help it. Any injustice arouses me!

Tirso.—I do not understand of what injustice you are complaining . . .

Sol.—Of ours.

Esperanza.—We do not do wrong to anyone!

Sol.—No. But just because we are very happy, very, very happy, I fear somewhat that there may be a little injustice on our account.

Acisclo.—May it last, may it last . . .

Sol.—And so it may, Don Acisclo, without our taking it from others, let us share it, let us share it . . .

Tirso.—That's it exactly.

Sol.—I am very fortunate, as are all of my household. I have a husband so good that if he were not my husband I should go and ask him if he would like to be . . .

Marquis (Chiding her affectionately).—Sol . . .

Father Muiños.—Now it is the dawn for you, Marquis.

Sol.—We have health, fortune, honors . . . Everything good is heaped upon us! But in the midst of such good fortune it makes me indignant and causes me to blush that there should be at our side a poor woman condemned to

suffer eternally on account of wicked men and absurd laws!

Acisclo.—Santa! . . .

Sol.—Santa, yes, sir. And when some one of my family takes from her some of the happiness she has counted upon, it makes it seem to me that we are the ones who are to blame for all her misfortunes.

Father Muiños (*Aside to ALVARO*).—The sun is rising for all of us and the dawn has become the broad day . . .

Esperanza.—Hers is a great misfortune . . .

Sol.—For her, yes, a great misfortune; for all the rest of us, a great shame,—for it is shameful that no one knows how to protect an abused and helpless woman.

Esperanza.—What are you saying, Sol?

Tirso.—What are you saying, daughter?

Marquis.—A truth, Alvaro . . .

Alvaro.—A truth, Antonio!

Father Muiños.—A truth, no more? Many of them, many . . .

Sol.—If I were in her position, after asking for all the counsel possible, after studying all the laws that could be found, if they told me, as they do her, that there is no law to undo the harm of another law, I believe that I should soon rise above all laws, defending my life and my happiness!

Esperanza.—Horrible!

Tirso.—What are you saying, daughter?

Acisclo.—Marchioness!

Sol.—Wouldn't she be right, Father Muiños? If they closed all doors to her, if they harassed her along every road, wouldn't she be right in taking matters into her own hands and rebelling?

Father Muiños.—I don't know, I don't know . . .
I am too humble to solve so great a question . . .

Esperanza.—Why, do you hear, Tirso?

Tirso.—Take it back, take it back. Sol de San Payo, Marchioness de Montrove, niece of his Eminence the Prelate of Campanela, cannot in her right mind say such blasphemous things.

Sol.—Am I such a criminal for showing compassion to an unhappy woman?

Esperanza.—That is not compassion . . .

Sol.—If it troubles you, consider that I did not say it, and I will not say it again.

Tirso.—That's it, that's it . . .

Sol.—But consider, too, that I think it and that I shall go on thinking it.

Esperanza.—No, no!

Tirso.—Worse and worse! Take it back!

SCENE XIII

THE SAME and PACA, (*at the left.*)

Paca.—Madam, the children are crying . . .

Sol.—I am going to comfort them.

Tirso (Stopping her).—Take it back, take it back!

Sol.—This is more urgent, father . . . (*And smiling, she releases herself from TIRSO and goes out to the left, followed by the servant, almost with a bound.*)

Father Muiños.—Happy are those who weep when they have someone to comfort them . . .

SCENE XIV

THE SAME, *except SOL and PACA*

Acisclo.—This is an outburst of excitement, of nervousness, but she does not think that way, no. Against the sanctity of the law? No, no.

Tirso.—Nervousness, yes, sir; evidently . . .

Esperanza.—The devil is loose in this house, Tirso

Tirso.—Evidently . . .

Esperanza.—Ask His Eminence for some relic and let us celebrate a very solemn function of vindication . . .

Tirso.—Very good, that seems to me very good. I wonder, Antonio, that you did not intervene to bring her to reason.

Marquis.—I think the same as she does, Don Tirso

Tirso.—You, too? Tomorrow a confessional will be needed, Esperanza. Evidently we are in mortal sin . . . Evidently!

SCENE XV

[THE SAME: DON ANTERO and MARCELO, (*at the back.*)

Antero.—May I come in?

Esperanza.—Doctor . . .

Antero (*Clothing of silk, words of silk and look of steel.*).—

My dear Madam *Esperanza* . . .

Esperanza.—It is your brother? The Consul? (*Bowing*)

Antero.—He comes to spend a few months with me, after fifteen years of absence. (*Introducing him.*) Don Tirso

. . . The Marquis of Montrove . . .

Marcelo.—Antonio?

Marquis.—Marcelo! (*They embrace each other.*)

Antero.—You didn't tell me that you knew him.

Marcelo.—The Marquis of Montrove, no.

Marquis.—I inherited the title from my Uncle Gaspar.

Marcelo.—But Antonio Wilson, I know very well. We were students together in Granada, and then, in America, comrades and intimate friends.

Tirso.—The Judge of the Court . . . My nephew Alvaro . . . Father Muiños . . .

Antero.—From today our friend. Up to today . . .

Father Muiños.—Up to today, Doctor?

Antero.—You didn't wish to be.

Father Muiños.—I didn't know . . .

SCENE XVI

THE SAME and PRIMITIVA, (*at the back.*)

Primitiva.—Madam, . . . oh, madam!

Esperanza.—What has happened to you?

Primitiva.—Oh, what a fright! I didn't want to go, but Doña Santa sent me and I wanted to be obedient. I am well punished for going alone at night!

Esperanza.—What was it, girl?

Primitiva.—Going by the Animas . . . Oh, what a fright!

Marcelo.—What is that—the Animas?

Antero.—A parochial church and formerly a cemetery.

Tirso.—What was it? Finish.

Primitiva.—Well, I saw some light dancing about in the portico. I shut my eyes . . . I prayed hard . . . and I got by without the dead ones doing me any harm.

Antero.—That wasn't very much, Primitiva.

Primitiva.—Wait, wait, for the frightful thing comes now. I went along almost confident, and on turning the corner of the road, right by the drug store of D. Anselmo, that they say he has made over to his nephew, a blond fellow whom he has had with him two years . . .

Esperanza.—Well, well . . . tell us the frightful thing.

Primitiva.—You will see. I was going along there, as I said . . . And soon I stopped more dead than alive! I heard the little bell of San Miguel ringing!

Antero.—It cannot be. Tonight the bells of Campanela will remain silent.

Primitiva.—I know it. That's the reason I say I stopped more dead than alive!

Esperanza.—You were dreaming . . .

Primitiva.—Oh, no, madam, I pinched myself just to see if it was a dream!

Antero.—Deliriums of yours.

Primitiva.—Wait, wait. As the sound was very plain, I entered very decided to ask Roque, the bell-ringer, and he said to me: "No, madam, Doña Primitiva"—you know he is very polite, for he is from Cambados—"no, Doña Primitiva, until tomorrow morning, at seven, I shall not go up in the belfry, for the first mass."—"And there is no one in the belfry?"—"No, madam, why should there be?"—"And you didn't hear the bell ring?"—"No, madam, you know when it rings by itself, it is because San Miguel allows the devil to do it, and then no one can hear it except those to whom misfortune is coming; for other ears it does not sound."

Antero.—You are very superstitious.

Primitiva.—Stop joking, Doctor. Didn't you hear it, Doña Esperanza?

Esperanza.—No, girl.

Primitiva.—No one in the house?

Tirso.—No one.

Primitiva.—Well, then, do you suppose the sign was for me? Oh, Lord! Well, after all, it is better it should be for

me than for you, for I did just what I had to do . . . and with me nothing is lost in this world. (*Grieving.*) And I know that you will all pray for me.

Marquis.—Come, don't be foolish . . .

Primitiva.—I shall not be, no, sir, but pray for me, pray for me . . .

Esperanza (*Embracing her.*).—Do not be frightened, *Primitiva* . . .

Primitiva.—You will let me light a candle before the Dolorosa?

Esperanza.—Yes, as many as you wish . . .

Primitiva.—And pray for me, pray for me . . . Promise me that you will! . . .

Esperanza.—Yes, yes . . . (*Takes her away to the right.*)

SCENE XVII

THE SAME: *except ESPERANZA and PRIMITIVA; then PACA, (at the left.) Afterwards SOL, (at the left.)*

Antero.—She has a mind to become uneasy over an imaginary sorrow.

Father Muiños.—You don't believe in apparitions nor goblins? . . .

Antero.—No, sir. And you?

Father Muiños.—Nor I either; but I believe in those who believe . . . and I am sorry for them.

Antero.—Take care of your own affairs, Father Muiños.

Father Muiños.—I am beginning to look out for myself alone . . . but it is a thing one cannot learn in a day. Excuse me . . .

Paca.—The carriage of the Cardinal is here!

Tirso.—Then announce him. (*PACA goes out to the right; all the rest, except FATHER MUIÑOS, go out to the left.*)

Sol.—The Archbishop.

Father Muiños (*Bowing*).—His Eminence . . .

Sol.—Do not tremble, Father Muiños; now you will see how kind he is.

Father Muiños.—I do not doubt it. And now my mind is at peace . . . He is my superior, on his voice depends my life, but even if he were the very dragon of Hell that St.

George vanquished, I should not tremble with the Angel at my side.

Sol.—Do not exaggerate so much, for it isn't right!

SCENE XVIII

THE SAME, (*At the right. SANTA, URSULA, TADEA, MARIQUIÑA, PILUCA, ESPERANZA, then at the back the CARDINAL followed by his servant and the others who come out to receive him.*)

Esperanza.—Is it the Cardinal?

Sol.—Yes, mama.

Cardinal (Entering).—May God grant us a good evening.

Esperanza.—Good evening, Cousin Cardinal. (*Kisses his ring.*)

Cardinal (Offering the ring to SOL to kiss).—And your little ones, Sol?

Sol.—They are asleep now. (*The other women approach to kiss the ring, URSULA and TADEA kneeling. The CARDINAL helping them to rise, says:*)

Cardinal.—In order to please your pious caprice that I should give you my blessing before you go to a secular amusement, here I am, Cousin Esperanza de Espiñeira, coming through these streets in the late hours of the night.

Acisclo.—It is a little after eleven . . .

Cardinal.—Everything is relative, Your Honor, and for me, such an excursion is very exceptional. But I didn't wish to refuse, first, for reasons of relationship, and, second, to calm the scruples of your conscience, and because coming to this house that God protects with an especial favor, always does me honor.

Tirso.—And adds honor to our house.

Sol.—Uncle Alfonso . . .

Cardinal.—What do you wish, daughter?

Sol.—To present to you Father Muños . . .

Cardinal.—I have already told you yes . . .

Father Muños (Whom SOL brings out of the corner where he has humbly remained, and who kneels).—Most Eminent Sir . . .

Cardinal.—I am aware of your repentance and your

proposals of reform. If they come from your heart, I pardon you most willingly and I shall take care that the material aid shall not be lacking. Rise, Father Muiños.

Father Muiños (Kissing his ring).—Most Eminent Sir

Cardinal.—Come to the Palace in the morning.

Sol.—Thank you very much!

Cardinal.—And now prepare yourselves, for I wish to retire soon.

Marquis.—Come . . .

Sol.—Come. (*THE MARQUIS, SOL, SANTA and the other women, except ESPERANZA, go out to the right.*)

SCENE XIX

THE SAME, (*except those above mentioned.*)

Alvaro.—Congratulations, Father!

Father Muiños.—But I ought to have said something, to have excused myself somewhat . . .

Alvaro.—No no; you will understand each other better always if you do not say anything.

Esperanza.—Sit down. Would you like some chocolate very clear? Or a bit of pastry?

Cardinal.—No . . .

Tirso.—A cup of coffee?

Cardinal.—No, nothing. Be seated. (*All sit down except the CARDINAL and ESPERANZA.*)

Esperanza.—Now, when you say a few words to them, as only you know how to say them, I shall be very grateful if you will make some allusion concerning the fitness of moderating certain expressions.

Cardinal.—To whom.

Esperanza.—To Sol.

Cardinal.—And that is?

Tirso.—I have a conviction that she herself has not measured the extent of her words, but it is not right, not even unconsciously, that she should protect rebellions and that she should discuss laws . . .

Esperanza.—She went so far as to assert that she, in the place of poor Santa, would not conform forever to submitting herself . . .

Acisclo.—A momentary aberration on the part of Sol, Cardinal.

Alvaro.—A piece of charity for Santa, Cardinal!

Esperanza.—What do you think? . . .

Cardinal (Who has been looking fixedly first at one and then another).—That it is a misfortune . . .

Esperanza.—That she should talk that way, is it not?

Cardinal.—Yes . . . that is another misfortune. And I shall reprove your daughter, for she is not the one who is called upon to give such grave and difficult advice.

Antero.—I think, like your Eminence, that the case is a very difficult one, and here, in the atmosphere of Campanela, very dangerous to discuss.

Marcelo.—Here, it is very possible that it is a problem: in the world, it is not so much so, for there are other laws that are more benignant than ours.

Cardinal.—Perhaps . . . but we are here, in Campanela. (*Primitiva enters at the right and places, lighted, a candle at the foot of the crucifix on the table.*)

Marcelo.—And none of us will find it strange that the Marquis of Montrove should have very liberal ideas.

Antero.—Yes, we knew that the Marquis had been in America.

Marcelo.—Had been there, is not quite the right phrase: he lived there, he married there the first time.

Tirso.—You say he married?

Esperanza.—Who?

Antero.—Antonio?

Marcelo.—I used to visit them often, but I had nothing to do with her after they were divorced for I didn't wish to make friends with her new husband.

Cardinal.—Why, of whom are you talking, Consul?

Marcelo.—Of Antonio, Cardinal.

Esperanza.—It cannot be!

Tirso.—You are mistaken.

Antero (Taking hold of him to prevent more).—You must be mistaken.

Cardinal.—You have confused the person.

Marcelo.—The person, no . . .

Tirso.—Why this is absurd! We shall convince you at once. (*Calling SOL!*)

Esperanza.—Sol!

Marcelo.—Perhaps I am mistaken, yes . . . I do not insist.

Tirso.—But now we insist. Sol! Sol!

Esperanza (*Clinging to TIRSO, uneasy*).—It cannot be, can it?

Tirso.—Of course it cannot be!

Marcelo.—But even if it were, I don't see anything serious nor grave . . .

Antero (*Severely*).—You don't know what you are saying!

Alvaro (*To FATHER MUIÑOS*).—Can it be true?

Father Muiños.—And the sun itself will set and men will believe that it is not to shine again.

Tirso.—Sol!

SCENE XXI

THE SAME: SOL and SANTA, (*with their hoods and masks on.*)

Sol.—Here we are, here we are!

Tirso.—Take off that mask! Quick! Quick!

Sol (*Taking it off*).—What has happened?

Tirso.—Take off the domino and make an end of the masquerade! Quick! Quick!

Sol (*Takes it off and lets it fall at her feet*).—But what has happened, father? . . .

Cardinal.—Sol de San Payo, did you know that Antonio had been married?

Sol.—How married?

Cardinal.—Before he married you?

Sol (*Laughing and putting on the mask*).—Is it a joke?

Tirso.—Take it off! Take it off!

Sol (*Taking it off*).—But what are you saying, for I don't understand?

Cardinal.—That Antonio had divorced another woman?

Sol.—Antonio? (*Still not comprehending. With anxiety.*) Antonio? (*Showing anger towards them.*) Lies of yours! (*Calling.*) Antonio! Antonio!

Tirso.—Antonio!

SCENE XXII

THE SAME: ANTONIO, (*with his overcoat and hat on, PILUCA and MARIQUIÑA on his arm, masked; afterwards, URSULA and TADEA, not masked.*)

Marquis.—Here I am.

Sol.—Tell them that they lie!

Marquis.—About what?

Sol.—First tell them that they lie! Tell them! Tell them!

Marquis.—But about what?

Sol.—About your having been married.

Marquis.—They do not lie.

Sol.—They do not lie? Is it true?

Marquis.—It is true.

Sol.—Antonio! Anto . . . ! (*Speech fails her and she falls into the arms of SANTA and TIRSO; the women release the MARQUIS' arm and take off their masks; the MARQUIS takes off his and remains motionless. Pause. The bell is heard far off and soft.*)

Father Muiños.—In case she should die, give her your blessing, sir!

Marquis.—In case she should live, still more give her your blessing, sir!

Primitiva.—Do you hear? Do you hear? The devil is ringing the bell of San Miguel! Misfortune has come upon this house! Pray, pray!

Cardinal (Blessing SOL).—In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit . . .

Primitiva.—For the poor woman wickedly married! Pray, pray! (*Kneeling at the foot of the crucifix.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

Scene the same as in the first act. On the table is still burning, almost consumed, the candle lighted to the DOLOROSA.

SCENE I

ANTONIO, *in a dress suit, with the bosom of his shirt wrinkled, his tie loose and his collar unbuttoned, has fallen over in an arm chair. Pause. Then PRIMITIVA, at the left.*

Primitiva (Approaching slowly and with an expression of sympathy).—Master, . . . it is nine o'clock in the morning . . . come take some breakfast. Do you want me to bring you the chocolate? . . . I made it myself from what the Santa Clara nuns sent us! . . . You don't want it? . . . If I bring you a cup of cascarrilla will you take a sup of it? You don't want that either?

Antonio (Refuses with languid gestures, taking her by the arm).—Primitiva, how is she?

Primitiva.—The mistress? She frightens me. She doesn't talk, doesn't answer, doesn't complain . . . but keeps her eyes open as if she saw a ghost and she has been that way all night! . . . I have never seen a sorrow so quiet and so calm . . . and we put one of Santa Apolonia's bones on her heart, but it doesn't seem to have any effect on her at all. She is just like she was when we put her in the bed yesterday. Only very early this morning, when they rang for mass at the convent, she motioned to me with her hand, and said "Is that the bell of San Miguel?" . . . "No, madam, no, it is the bell of the convent!"

She smiled as if she knew better than I did where the bell was . . . And I tell you it frightened me to see that smile on her lips and the rest of her face so cold and wax-like!

Antonio.—Today everything frightens one . . .

Primitiva.—And with reason. I am going to try and say some sad things to her to see if she will cry and that way break the knot of sorrow . . . but I imagine she doesn't know what is said to her. Do you know what I think? . . . that they have taken her soul away from this world,

as happened a few years ago to a woman of Negreira, who also on account of a great grief was without a soul for three days and three nights, and when it came back to her they had to explain to her all that had happened in that time, for she didn't remember anything.

Antonio.—May be so . . .
Primitiva.—May God help if it be so. I knew her; she was the daughter of the Notary, named Don Manuel and her name was Doña Socorro . . . and she lay so still during that absence of her spirit, that even her body grew weak . . . (*Pause.*) Cheer yourself up a little! . . . You have been here in this chair for many hours and that can't be right. (*Pause.*)

Antonio (Taking her by the arm).—Is it raining, Primitiva?

Primitiva.—Yes, it is raining, sir. Don't you hear the water against the window panes and the stones of the balcony? . . . (*Pause.*) Why don't you change your clothes? . . . (*Seeing that he replies to nothing, she stops trying to animate this block of marble and goes to the table.*) Could you not, dear Dolorosa, lay your hand upon these sorrows and do a great favor to honorable people . . . If you would but ask the Son who rests in thy lap, he would not refuse thee, no! . . . (*Looks at the DOLOROSA, then at ANTONIO, puts out the light, taking it away.*)

SCENE II

THE SAME: SANTA, (*at the right.*)

Santa (After looking at PRIMITIVA and the latter indicating by signs the condition of ANTONIO, retires at the back, takes a chair and sits down by the side of ANTONIO).—How are you now?

Antonio (Forcing a smile).—Very well . . .

Santa.—Father Muiños has been here three times to enquire about you; but he didn't venture to disturb you . . . ; he said that he would come back. (*Pause.*) The grandmother sent the children to Aunt Concha's.

Antonio.—She did very well . . .

Santa.—Do you know that they have sent for the Judge and the Doctor Antero to advise with them?

Antonio.—Of course, Santa, of course. Now the parents of Sol will come, the Ecclesiastic will come and the Magistrate will come . . . and in the name of society, of the Church and of the Courts, they will all lash my sorrowing flesh with the lashes of their wrath and their threats . . . Of course, Santa, of course.

Santa.—It was inevitable that they should consult . . .

Antonio.—I understand, and I do not avoid it . . . My anguish is not for myself; it is for her. (*Taking her by the arm and with anxiety.*) How is she? . . .

Santa.—Overcome. Not grieving, nor indignant, nor terrified . . . no, no, overcome, undone, like a doll that they have taken the spring out of and won't move.

Antonio.—That had to be . . . The suffering will come later, when she recovers herself and takes account of things. And then . . . What will be best for Sol? Our affection, our home upset and in torment . . . Or the beatific peace of the family, of friends of the house, of its furnishings? . . . Will she let herself be drawn by the impulses of humanity which would bring her to me . . . or will there conquer in her the traditions, the counsels and the very atmosphere of this dead city of Campanela?

Santa.—And what can I tell you!

Antonio.—I know that no one can tell me . . . But the conviction is horrible that in a decisive hour the oppressing trifles of material life must influence us and our most far-reaching resolutions! . . . Today I am playing for love, for happiness . . . for everything, Santa! Do you realize it?

Santa.—Unfortunately . . .

Antonio.—Well. I do not fear for her consideration of the bond of our marriage, I do not fear for the consideration of her conscience, I do not fear for her consideration of the children . . . And, on the other hand, I have a fear that Sol may consider that she will no longer be able to go through the Rua Nueva, that she will see no more this hall, that she will hear no more, when she awakes, the bells of the convent! . . . Yes, Santa, yes . . . What I fear is this attachment to material things, this tie of custom, this struggle with the environment!

Santa.—All, all.

Antonio.—All, yes, but this most of all. If you did not

live in a town that measures the acts and analyzes friendships and regulates the expansion of the affections . . . if no one should judge your actions but yourself, and if Alvaro could speak to you where only you could listen to him . . . Alvaro would be happy already.

Santa (Rising).—No! Here or elsewhere I shall be always the same.

Antonio (Softly).—Nothing is the same on a cold and rainy day as on a day of light and warmth . . . he who is a prisoner does not think the same when he finds himself free . . . and the opinion of a small town is not the same as that of a great city . . .

Santa.—I beg you not to insist, for merely speaking in such a way is an offense in the house of San Payo.

Antonio.—Of course. An offense to the house, to the name, to the town, to the environment . . . once more we are caught in the claws! (*Pause. Rising.*) Is your lot so enviable? . . . Your lot of an abandoned one, of an outcast. Is it so enviable that you would recommend it to us all?

Santa.—There is no help for it . . .

Antonio.—And that's exactly what we are coming to, to seek the help and the protection that others owe us. There is no reason to resign one's self to an evil that can be helped!

Santa.—And becoming rebellious . . . will you lessen your sorrows?

Antonio.—Mine . . . mine, I do not know; those of others, certainly.

Santa.—You probably know what you are doing; for myself, I shall never go against the mandates.

Antonio.—Note well what I say. First . . . first! seek protection from the courts, submit to the proceedings, respect the decisions . . . that, first! Afterwards . . . note well, afterwards, when there is no law applicable, nor solution for our conflicts; when they answer, as to me, never! or as to you, in thirty years! then, then! Then your life is the law and by it alone should you be guided!

Santa.—No, Antonio, no . . .

Antonio.—Then the law is your death. And badly you do in choosing it. (*SANTA bows her head resigned. ANTONIO, saddened by that passiveness, sits down again overcome. Exit SANTA, to the right.*)

SCENE III

ANTONIO, TIRSO, DON ACISCLO, and DON ANTERO, (*at the back.*)

Antero.—Good day, Marquis . . . (ANTONIO rises quickly and bows.)

Tirso.—We wish to talk with you. We do not wish that you should charge that an extreme resolution was taken without hearing you.

Antero.—And you will appreciate the delicacy of Don Tirso in not directing to you any reproach nor censure.

Acisclo.—A great delicacy in the present circumstances.

Antero.—And you will excuse us for interfering, but they asked our opinion . . . If you do not object, we should be glad to hear from yourself the history of this deplorable affair . . .

Tirso.—If there is any human salvation, we should like to hear from him; if not, may the will of God be done by us . . .

Acisclo.—Do you have any objection to telling us . . .?

Antonio.—None. (*Invites them to sit down and he remains standing.*)—My mother, a Spanish woman, married an American. On one of the visits they made to Spain, I was born, in Granada. I came back there years afterwards to take my law course, then I went back to continue my studies in New York, becoming naturalized as an American citizen to practice my profession in my father's office. (*Pause.*) I married very young.

Antero.—In the church?

Acisclo.—Or just a civil marriage?

Antonio.—In the church. My mother wished it.

Tirso.—It was your mother's duty.

Antonio.—Peace was of short duration . . . at the end of two years we asked for a divorce.

Antero.—You should have opposed it.

Antonio.—And why? . . . There the civil law is supreme . . . A year later she married again. (*Pause.*) And I, though convinced of her perfect right to make this marriage,—it seemed to me as if the world was crushing me and I became ill with rage and gloom, not daring to go out on the street for fear of meeting them.

Antero.—That's the result of such laws.

Antonio.—If the others did not result the same, I would choose the others. But they are worse. Those cause shame and grief for a day . . . for a year . . . these cause it forever!

Antero.—That is not at all certain!

Antonio.—Not certain! Just take the case of Santa! And my own!

Acisclo.—Let us not argue now.

Antonio.—Very well. My mother persuaded them to let me return to Europe, and I came to take refuge in the house of my uncle, the Marquis of Montrove, who lived alone on his estate of Ulla. We spent several years there, he and I, together and alone; he died, and I continued a recluse, until one day the attorney came to notify me that it was urgent that the matter of the inheritance should be adjusted or I would expose myself to suits and fines. And with an affectionate chiding for an isolation he couldn't understand, he added, "It seems too bad, Don Antonio, that with your position, with health and with your thirty-one years, you shouldn't enjoy a little of life." . . . When he came it was ten o'clock in the morning; when they called me to lunch at two, I was still saying over to myself: "You are only thirty, Antonio . . . why do you not live? Why do you make yourself gloomy, keeping up mourning for a sentiment without reason and without logic?" . . . And that morning I came to life! (Pause.)

I came to Campanela to sign some documents; I became acquainted with Sol, I allowed myself to be carried away by the irresistible charm of her beauty and her goodness, and wishing to go honorably in search of the treasure of love which she offered me, I hastened to the wise ministers of the court of La Rota in order that they might enlighten me and guide me.

Antero.—They could not.

Antonio.—They replied that it could not be, could never be. I hastened to the Apostolic Nunciature . . .

Acisclo.—They probably said the same.

Antonio.—They said the same: never! . . . I hastened to prostrate myself at the feet of the Sovereign Pontiff and they gave me the same inflexible reply: never . . . And I, in despair, kept asking myself without ceasing: but why should it never be?

Antero.—The bond exists.

Antonio.—But why should it exist? Why this obstinacy in affirming that one cannot break a thing which is already broken?

Acisclo.—In fact, not by right.

Antonio.—And what right have I over a woman who is already married to another man? What right? What? What, your Honor? What, Doctor?

Acisclo.—None.

Antero.—None, in truth; but the bond . . .

Antonio.—The bond is a spiritual tie that unites two persons. I am one. And the other? Who is the other? There is no other . . . Why do you not see the absurdity of such a conclusion? Don't you see it?

Antero.—You make the question a material one and we speak of the divine tie which unites on earth and continues in the other life.

Antonio.—In the other life? . . . The widower who contracts a second or third marriage, will he be united in the other life to two or three women? No, no, you will not say that?

Antero.—No.

Tirso.—Of course not.

Antonio.—Consequently, the spiritual bond is broken here on earth in the same way and at the same moment as the physical bond. And, then, why should one use bands of iron to hold together that which is of earth and clay and nothing more?

Acisclo.—We cannot abolish the law.

Antero.—Nor the Councils, especially that of Trent.

Antonio.—No? In truth, not? If the Doctor believes in the efficacy of all the Councils . . . either he does not remember all of them or he will find it very difficult to explain their contradictions.

Antero.—Each one was the work of its time and met a social necessity.

Antonio.—Correct, strictly correct. And that is what I ask, that the laws should keep pace with the times, that they should not apply to the life of today the conciliar acts of the sixteenth century . . . and that is why they kept replying to me: never, never, never! . . .

Tirso (Aside to ANTERO).—Isn't he right?

Antero.—No.

Antonio.—And what I ask, I beg, I implore . . . I have, moreover, a right to demand it, with words that are not mine: “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.” . . .

Antero.—I do not see how you can use this testimony in demanding it.

Antonio.—The State, king or republic, isn’t it Caesar? Are there not States that grant the validity of second marriages?

Acisclo.—Some . . .

Antonio.—Very well, in denying this validity to the law of any nation whatever they do not give to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s.

Antero.—That is not being a good catholic . . .

Antonio.—But I should like to be! Have I not submitted myself and have I not begged that they should show me precisely the way! What ought I to have done, Doctor? I did not make a vow of chastity . . . Have I the right to seek a companion?

Acisclo.—Yes.

Antonio.—Then I had the right to marry.

Antero.—No.

Acisclo.—No.

Antonio.—Then . . . You would counsel me to seek a mistress?

Antero.—No!

Antonio.—Then, what? What ought I to have done? Tell me, I am ready to obey.

Acisclo.—Let us come to another point, let us come to another point.

Antonio.—Without answering the one I have brought up, that is to say, leaving me to solve it? . . . Let us go to anything you wish, Judge.

Acisclo.—How did you arrange your papers to make out that you were a bachelor?

Antonio.—I didn’t have to arrange anything. Being an American subject, no one thought of notifying the Spanish Consul. When I needed here the documents for the inheritance, they gave me the parish birth certificate and that of the Registrar without any notations, appearing consequently entirely free.

Acisclo.—You should have rectified it.

Antonio.—I didn't do it at that time for it would have delayed the possession of the inheritance, and the only thing important was the certificate of my personality, not of my state in life.

Acisclo.—And why didn't you rectify it afterwards?

Antonio.—Afterwards . . . because I did not know what I should put in such a rectification. Bachelor? . . . No, since I had been married. Married? No, because I had no wife. Widower? No, because she was not dead. My legal status was that of a divorcé, but as that is not a legal status in Spain, they will not admit it in the Civil Register, and still less in the parochial books. (And not being able to make the notation as a bachelor, nor as a married man, nor as a widower, I decided to put nothing at all, leaving things just as they were.)

Acisclo.—Very badly done. That omission is punished with a fine of from fifty to two hundred pesetas, according.

Antonio.—Is the fine the thing you consider serious today?

Acisclo.—Oh, no, sir . . .

Tirso.—What is your opinion, Doctor? . . .

Antero.—Unfortunately there is little room for doubt: that this second marriage is null and that the immediate separation of the couple should take place.

Tirso.—It is true . . . (And bowed down he remains in deep meditation.)

Antonio.—And you, Judge?

Acisclo.—The same. That it must be considered null and we must consider it the same as if it had not occurred, saving all respect and every consideration for the unfortunate lady. And as for the Marquis, I see myself under the sad necessity of informing him that it is treated in article 486 of the Penal Code and that he is liable to the maximum penalty of imprisonment . . .

Antonio.—For the crime of bigamy?

Acisclo.—Certainly.

Antonio.—But a bigamist is a person who has two wives. Who are the two? Sol, one.

Acisclo.—And the one over there, two.

Antonio.—The one married to another man? She who has a husband and a legitimate family? But do you really mean to say that she is my wife? Are you really capable of

condemning me for a crime which you yourself say I have not committed, can not commit, and which it is actually impossible to commit? . . . Would you have the conscience to sign such a decision?

Acisclo.—It is one of those cases that I should report fully to the Legal Commission, but my feelings must necessarily be silent, inasmuch as there exists Article 486 exact and precise.

Antonio.—Oh, Judge! You silence ~~your~~ conscience in order to condemn me, and you claim that I am misusing mine in order to defend myself?

Acisclo (Excusing himself).—Article four hundred eighty-six . . .

Antero.—Come, Don Tirso, a little courage in adversity.

Tirso (Rising terrified).—She is not married, no . . . Then what is the legal status of my poor daughter?

Acisclo.—Spinster.

Antero.—Spinster.

Tirso (Frightened, as if he did not comprehend).—Spinster?

Antonio.—No, Don Tirso, no! Badly married, if I am a bad husband! Being I am as I am, well married before God and before man.

Antero.—Before us, no.

Antonio.—I do not speak of you: I speak of those who have hearts and pity . . .

Antero (Rising).—Courage, Don Tirso, courage, for you must look to the consolation of your own, and you are the head of the family . . . (*ANTERO and ACISCLO go out to the right, taking with them the unhappy father* . . . *ANTONIO remains motionless.*)

SCENE IV

ANTONIO, FATHER MUIÑOS, at the back.

Father Muiños (Approaching humbly).—Good day, Marquis

Antonio (Affectionately, but sadly).—Hello, Father Muiños.

Father Muiños.—Did you rest some? . . . I ask just for the sake of asking, for too well I realize the anxieties of the great struggle of your spirit . . .

Antonio.—Of the great defeat, Father . . .

Father Muiños.—May the Virgin help . . . (*Noticing the disorder of his clothing.*) Didn't you go to bed . . . Why haven't you changed your clothes anyway? I know that it does not matter to you at such a time . . . But it should. If you could see what a good argument there is in a new suit and a clean collar! . . . Today they admitted me as far as the office of the Secretary of the Chamber; he never saw me in the other dress, Marquis . . . Change your clothes, Don Antonio, change them, for they will measure the firmness of your judgment by the appearance of the dress!

Antonio.—I shouldn't be surprised . . .

Father Muiños.—And if you wish to listen to the voice of this humble priest, for I was very foolish and they have made me very cautious . . . put on your uniform, if you have it, with all the showy decorations, if you have received some, for they all add brilliancy to your person, and brilliancy is reason in many dark places of this wicked world.

Antonio.—I know it, I know it . . . And did you speak with the Cardinal?

Father Muiños.—He has suspended the audiences for today; he will look after me on another occasion, for my case is not urgent . . . yours, yours . . .

Antonio.—Do you know, Father, that they threaten me with imprisonment?

Father Muiños.—Are they really capable of doing that?

Antonio.—It doesn't cause me any fear, for I was very careful not to lose my American citizenship, in case that some day there might happen what happened yesterday.

Father Muiños.—You did well to be on your guard; for they trample everything under foot, everything . . .

Antonio.—But even though there exists no personal fear of this threat, it is too bad that one has to be on one's guard, when one ought to go with assurance and trusting in justice and the judges.

Father Muiños.—But it is not so. And do you know why it isn't so? Because those appointed to judge us are those who do not suffer and never will suffer from the ills for which we ask help of them. It may be that I talk absurdities, that I always walked along in error and very near to irreverence; but it seems to me that it would be right and just that the

courts should be composed of those who might perhaps suffer the same sorrows that they have to judge.

Antonio.—That is nonsense, Father . . .

Father Muiños.—Yes, sir. Nonsense that the hungry should be judged by one who perhaps has been without food; the humble by one who has never known pride; the persecuted by one who perhaps has never a peaceful hour, . . . and he who suffers from love and from the passions of love, should never be judged by one who has renounced voluntarily the knowledge of what love is.

Antonio.—Then no one would be condemned and we should all be pardoned.

Father Muiños.—All pardoned through having compassion one for another? . . . It would come to be then that we all should love each other as brothers . . . and on that day, would be moved with satisfaction and with joy the One who walked by the sea-shore, and who went then up into the mountain and spake from there, saying: Love one another . . .

Antonio.—An inopportune moment to recall it to me.

Father Muiños.—Pardon me, Marquis. Erring often in my opinions, it is not strange that I should also err in the moment. Change your clothes, change them, for in this I am not mistaken . . .

Antonio.—It is all the same to me.

Father Muiños.—Do it then to please me. Come, please?

Antonio.—All right . . . (*Both go out to the left.*)

SCENE V

ALVARO, enters at the back and waits; then at the left, SANTA and PRIMITIVA.

Alvaro.—How are they?

Santa.—You may imagine . . .

Primitiva.—They made my mistress get up and then they shut themselves up, counseling her and preaching to her. I am going to pray a little, Don Alvaro, to see if the Holy Spirit may not touch the feelings of these gentlemen, for in my opinion there is more danger in this assembly than in all the mischief the Marquis has done.

Santa.—Don't talk foolishness . . .

Primitiva.—Perhaps I am, for wisdom is not given to me . . . ; but I'll not get over my fear of the Church, not in years.

Santa.—Pray, pray, that will be better.

Primitiva.—I am going to. And at the door of the room, in case I may be needed. (*Exit to the right.*)

SCENE VI

SANTA and ALVARO

Alvaro.—The house is falling, Santa. Peace is at an end, and ruin and disruption are coming. What is going to become of you, Santa? . . .

Santa.—Do not speak of me now.

Alvaro.—For them we can do nothing.

Santa.—Nothing? . . .

Alvaro.—Grieve for them, sympathize with them . . . and tell them so; but it is useless to believe that all this will help them.

Santa.—Is there no remedy for the rupture?

Alvaro.—No remedy.

Santa.—And will they annul the marriage?

Alvaro.—Certainly. That law, which does not exist to invalidate an unhappy marriage like yours, they will find it to annul a happy one like theirs.

Santa.—Alvaro . . .

Alvaro.—The injustice is very apparent to you, isn't it? And yet, you resign yourself. It is inexplicable, Santa, inexplicable! (*Pause. Returning to a tone of reasoning.*) The house is falling, it is cruel . . . you agree! it is inhuman . . . you agree! But it is evident and it is necessary to seek another refuge as soon as possible.

Santa.—I haven't any, Alvaro.

Alvaro.—That is what I say; you haven't . . . And you must have it!

Santa.—Impossible . . . Even though I should commit the folly of going with you . . . Don't you see yourself, from what is happening here, that no one would justify us?

Alvaro.—No one. But who protects you from those who will not justify you? Nobody? Then see, Santa, to bother about the future opinion of those who are of no value to you neither in the present nor in the future, seems to me more foolish still.

Santa.—That is so, but still it is evident to me that I have the esteem of everyone.

Alvaro.—A great thing you have! The worry of calls, the words they say to you on the street, and cards on your Saint's day . . . You are satisfied with very little!

Santa.—You well know that there is something else.

Alvaro.—Yes, but to that something else you do not wish to go.

Santa (Becoming serious).—No.

Alvaro.—And why not? . . . Listen to me, my dear Santa, listen to me. If there remains to you one single hope of being able to guide your life according to the honesty laid down by the law and social formulas, pay no attention to my prayers and follow on along the road of this hope. If there remains to you none, and if in the depths of your heart you have the evidence that you are free and are committing treason against no one . . . come with me.

Santa.—No, Alvaro, no.

Alvaro.—And I do not ask you even to do that. Do not come with me; and let me be for you no more than just what I am now . . . but go away from Campanela.

Santa.—Leave here?

Alvaro.—Campanela is your enemy . . . and mine. Believe me, Santa; leave a city that weeps always with the water of its rains . . . that groans daily with the monotonous sound of its bells . . . that delights in keeping its old houses and its old furniture. Believe me, Santa, leave a city that loves the clouds during the day and phantoms during the night, and choose a city that enjoys light and activity and that loves joy, which is the sole possession of mortals.

Santa.—Antonio, too, spoke today against my dear Campanela.

Alvaro.—Antonio, of course. Everyone who is not of marble or granite must protest against the sadness of things that add to life one sadness more, unnecessary and lasting.

Santa.—You may think as you like, but I shall not

abandon the house, and much less when in it those who love me are suffering.

Alvaro.—I also love you, I also am suffering and I also am going away from here.

Santa (Taking him by the arm).—Alvaro! . . .

Alvaro.—I have already asked the Ministry to transfer me to another garrison in order to see if I cannot put an end to this absurd struggle against the impossible. Hear me, my dear Santa . . . hear me, Santa, for like a real Saint I name you in my prayers.

Santa (Drawing back).—No, no.

Alvaro (Advancing).—I love you . . .

Santa.—No, Alvaro, no . . .

Alvaro (Taking her by the arm).—I love you, my dear Santa.

Santa (Frightened, but without moving).—Alvaro, Alvaro!

Alvaro (Embracing her with delicacy).—And for a word of affection I would give my life for you, and I would even be grateful, my darling Santa.

Santa.—No, no, no . . .

Alvaro (On seeing her motionless, he embraces her tenderly, and wishes to kiss her).—Santa . . .

Santa (Struggling).—No! no! no! (When she succeeds in releasing herself, stiff and proud, pointing out to him the door.) Go.

Alvaro.—Pardon me . . .

Santa.—Go.

Alvaro.—It was a delirium of love . . . Pardon me, my dear Santa!

Santa (Impassible).—Go!

Alvaro.—Santa! Santa! My dear Santa! . . .

(Seeing her impassible, he changes his tone of entreaty for one of firm resolution.) I am going away from here, from the house, from Campanela . . . (Pause.) You command it.

Santa.—Go.

Alvaro.—For always?

Santa.—For always.

Alvaro (Inflexible also).—Farewell, then . . . and pardon. Pardon, Santa de San Payo . . . Soul of marble, will of granite, heart of clouds . . . Santa de Campanela . . . pardon! (Exit at the back.)

SCENE VII

SANTA, (*a moment motionless, advances slowly, grave, but already overcome; on reaching the door at the left bursts out weeping convulsively and in silence, leaning against the wall. Pause.*) Then PRIMITIVA, *at the right.*)

Primitiva.—Now the consultation of the wise men is ended . . . (*Approaching.*) What has happened?

Santa (*Trying to smile.*).—Nothing . . .

Primitiva.—Very well, I shall believe it is nothing. (*Looking at the balcony.*) Lord, how it is raining! It goes to one's very bones, and this everlasting pouring down makes one's heart ache to escape from here and seek a town more. . .

Santa (*Interrupting her angrily.*).—Be still!

Primitiva (*Astonished.*).—What did I say wrong? . . . It wasn't any lie, as far as I know . . .

Santa (*With her usual gentleness.*).—No, no . . . but be still.

Primitiva.—Very well. Your nerves are all upset, aren't they? You are not the only one . . .

SCENE VIII

THE SAME: SOL and DOÑA ESPERANZA, (*at the right.*)

Santa (*Rushing towards her.*).—What did they say to you, Sol? . . .

Sol.—What did they say, mother?

Esperanza.—That the poor girl is not at all to blame, that all respect and every consideration is due her, but that from this very day, from this very hour she must leave this man, and if she doesn't do so, from now on she will be just as guilty as he.

Sol.—More; they said more.

Esperanza.—That the courts would punish the crime, reserving for Sol all the privileges of an innocent partner.

Sol.—That is of no importance to me.

Esperanza.—And that to avoid the shame of imprisonment and even of a trial, they will propose to him that he shall leave, agreeing in writing never to return to Campanela.

Sol.—More, more; they said more. That I am not married, that I never was . . .

Primitiva (Crossing herself).—Lord! Holy Virgin! . . .

Sol.—And in saying that, they lie!

Esperanza.—Sol! Remember that you are speaking of most respectable persons . . .

Sol.—I am speaking of them, and they lie.

Primitiva.—Of course they lie.

Esperanza.—Keep still, will you?

Sol.—I shall no longer be married, if the law dissolves my marriage . . . But to say that I was never married? I was, with all the laws, and with all the sacraments and with all my conscience and with all the good counsel of my parents and my judges and my confessor!!

Primitiva (In a low tone).—Of course you were . . .

Santa (Embracing her).—Sol, Sol . . .

Esperanza.—Very well, very well . . . We shall have plenty of time to discuss the past. Let us come now to the present. Call him who was your husband and let him choose between leaving the house or forcing us to leave it.

Sol (Suddenly weakening in her strength).—Later, mother.

Esperanza.—No, immediately.

Sol (Overcome).—Later, later . . .

Esperanza.—No. It is necessary to face the situation at once.

Sol.—Oh, mother! (*Exhausted, she falls into an arm chair, weeping silently and with her face hidden in her hands.*)

Santa.—Do you want me to speak to him? . . .

Esperanza (Gently).—She must do it . . . It is necessary to arrange today the matter of the children, the matter of the absence . . . everything. And we'll see if God wishes, at least, to save us the blush of scandal.

Primitiva (In a low tone).—Do not despair, my lady, do not despair . . .

Santa.—She will see him, yes, but leave her a moment . . .

Esperanza.—What do we gain by putting it off? . . . More uneasiness, more anguish . . . and continuing in mortal sin as long as he lives under the same roof. Do you not understand, Santa?

SCENE IX

THE SAME and FATHER MUIÑOS, (*at the left.*)

Father Muiños.—Pardon me if I interrupt you . . . I come with a message from the Marquis of Montrove.

Esperanza.—What does he wish?

Father Muiños.—He is already dressed to leave the house . . . (*SOL rises quickly, looking anxiously at FATHER MUIÑOS; the latter becomes disconcerted and lowers his eyes, not venturing to raise them during the rest of the scene.*)

Esperanza (*Restraining her in a low tone*).—Sol! (Pause.) Finish your errand, Father Muiños.

Father Muiños.—I was saying . . . I was saying that he is about to leave the house to give you greater tranquility, but first he wishes to take leave of the Marchioness.

Esperanza.—Leave-takings are unnecessary.

Father Muiños.—The expression was a stupid one . . . He did not say take leave of the Marchioness, he said for a conference, and interview.

Esperanza.—Exclusively for the consideration of business?

Father Muiños.—Business, yes, madam.

Esperanza.—And without mixing in an inopportune word of affection nor of pardon.

Father Muiños.—I cannot guarantee what they may say to each other.

Esperanza.—For Sol her mother will answer.

Father Muiños.—And I . . . if you consider that I am anyone . . . I may vouch for the respectful and conciliatory attitude of the Marquis of Montrove.

Esperanza.—Let us make an end of it. Tell him that we are waiting for him, and that we shall be grateful if he will make this painful interview as short as possible.

Father Muiños.—I will tell him. And excuse me, all of you, for I have only delivered his message, as I shall deliver yours. (*Exit to the left.*)

Esperanza.—I shall do you the merited favor of imagining that you do not need the presence of anyone in order to preserve your dignity of a woman and your pride of a mother. Come, Primitiva. Let us go, Santa. (*Exit to the right.*)

Santa (*Whom SOL seizes quickly as if she does not wish her to leave, and who releases herself blandly*).—Be brave.

Sol (Letting her go).—I shall force myself to be. (Exit SANTA to the right.)

SCENE X

SOL and PRIMITIVA.

Primitiva.—I have not come to give advice, madam, nor do I know who is right among all these who make charges against one another, but that you are right I haven't the slightest doubt, madam.

Sol.—About what am I right?

Primitiva.—In saying that you are married.

Sol.—I was.

Primitiva.—And you still are! Nobody needs to tell me what I have seen with my own eyes. Didn't I see the Cardinal give you his blessing! Well, then, what are they disputing about?

Sol.—Because he had another wife already.

Primitiva.—Then let them release the other one.

Sol.—She was before me.

Primitiva.—(So much the worse for her, for in love the second one always has the advantage over the first. And besides, where was she?) In America, wasn't she? And is that which the heretics did of more value than what was done by the Most Holy Cathedral of the city? I never expected to hear tell of such a thing!

Sol.—But Antonio committed a crime . . .

Primitiva.—That's his lookout. Let them put him in prison, him and all the rest of the Americans. But, as for you, you were married, most solemnly married by the Archbishop and in the Holy Cathedral, for I saw it myself.

Sol.—You speak the truth, for the law cannot blot out the years of life together, nor the children, nor . . .

Primitiva (Interrupting).—Nor the love which you have for each other.

Sol.—No! Love, not now, Primitiva!

Primitiva.—And why not? . . . However criminal a person may be, if he does not sin against love, let all the world turn against him, love will not, but will follow after him . . .

Sol.—Be still, be still!

Primitiva.—And I will, but the truth is the truth, whether it is said or not . . . And when you talk with him, speak as a married woman, for you are. Believe me when I say it, for you are!

Sol.—Go now, go . . .

Primitiva.—And do not be frightened too much, for I went out very early and put a candle before the shrine of San Miguel, and another smaller one at the . . . at the shrine farther on, you know? . . .

Sol.—Yes, go now, go . . .

Primitiva.—Have no fear, for in this way we are sure to get along all right. Believe me! (*Exit PRIMITIVA at the back.*)

SCENE XI

SOL, then ANTONIO.

Antonio (At the left).—Sol . . . (*Pause.*) Sol, pardon me.

Sol.—No!!

Antonio.—Understand me; I mean, pardon my presence. I ask pardon for nothing else now.

Sol.—For what do you come?

Antonio.—First, to see you; afterwards, I don't know. . .

Sol.—Don't add mockery to it, Antonio. Say what you wish, if you wish anything, and let us finish.

Antonio.—Quickly, you say . . . but in your hands is the whole matter, for as soon as you decide it, I shall have finished, finished forever.

Sol.—Words are useless, for I know now how little they mean from your lips. Why have you lied, Antonio?

Antonio.—I kept silent . . .

Sol.—It is the same thing.

Antonio.—It is the same thing. And if I had not lied, what would have happened? With your parents, you see for yourself . . . Without a single complaint against me, and after eleven years, they did not hesitate for a second to treat me as a criminal and a reprobate. With you . . . what would have happened with you? You do not struggle now when you have husband and children to defend . . .

And would you have struggled then for the affection of a lover, nothing more?

Sol.—You were under obligations to be frank with me.

Antonio.—And to have told you? . . . In order that you might refuse me? . . . No, no . . .

Sol.—In order that I might refuse you, yes; that would have been the honorable thing. And then you would have merited my esteem, which now I do not feel for you.

Antonio.—*Sol* . . .

Sol.—I do not feel it! (It is an infamy that you have done us; an infamy you have put upon your children, and an eternal infamy that awaits me.) Well, all this, all, seems to me nothing compared to the disillusion, the disenchantment, the immense bitterness of persuading myself that the man I loved and believed loyal is only a man wicked and worthy of contempt.

Antonio.—*Sol!*

Sol.—A man who lies and deceives, and who never could have loved me, since he had reconciled himself to cause me such an injury. Had I inspired in you any noble sentiment, you would have sacrificed everything, even to giving me up, rather than drag me along to deception and shame!

Antonio.—And it was just the contrary . . . I risked everything, I considered everything, nothing daunted me, except the idea of giving you up. . . . My love was so great that all other things, absolutely all, were as nothing compared to it.

Sol.—Do not say that, for your deceit was wicked.

Antonio.—Wicked, that is true; nor am I even trying to justify it. But I am not accused of robbery, nor of murder . . . My guilt is one of love, my crime is one of love . . . and my condemnation, that which you impose upon me, must also be one of love!

Sol (Advancing).—And is it so certain that you loved me?

Antonio (Stopping her with a gesture).—Stop there, stop. For now I begin to see clearly what I should say to you. You even ask me if I loved you? . . . Let us see, let us see. My social position is equal to yours.

Sol.—Higher.

Antonio.—Let us say that they are equal. Then it is evident that I did not marry you through a desire for a family alliance.)

Sol.—Of course not!

Antonio.—Very well; nor for your money either . . .

Sol.—Nor that either!

Antonio.—Well. Then it is evident that I did not marry you through avarice. I might have married you through a caprice to win a woman pretty and desirable . . . That it was not caprice has been shown by the time that we have lived together, with the same illusion of love as on the first day . . . Is that so? . . . Yes, or no? . . .

Sol (Coming up to him).—Yes, Antonio.

Antonio.—But stop, stop. This was the love of yesterday; now I am going to show you the love of today. You are unhappy on my account; you shall not be so for any difficulty that I shall put in your way, for I shall submit, unconditionally, without reply and without protest to the decision you may make. And whatever you decide—be it what it may and however bitter it may be—whatever you may decide, I shall do without any hesitation.

Sol.—Be it what it may? . . . Do you know what you are promising? . . . If for example they decide to separate us? . . .

Antonio.—If they decide, no; if you decide . . . for I yield to you, but not to the others.

Sol.—And if I say so? . . .

Antonio.—We shall separate.

Sol.—And never see each other again?

Antonio.—Never.

Sol.—And if we should meet by chance?

Antonio.—It will not be possible; I shall go away from here . . .

Sol.—And the children? . . .

Antonio.—They shall be yours.

Sol.—They will remain at my side, with me? . . .

Antonio.—With you, for that is right. And with the greater part of my fortune.

Sol (Severely).—Antonio!

Antonio.—Which I shall leave to them. That, too, is right.

Sol.—And you will not try to see them, nor write? . . .

Will your courage be great enough for that? . . .

Antonio.—It will. And if some time they should ask for me, you will tell them the truth, saying that I am dead.

Sol.—No.

Antonio (Smiling).—But you will see that you can tell them so . . . and you will be quite right in saying it!

Sol (Rushing towards him).—Antonio! . . .

Antonio (Embracing her affectionately).—But if this is to be so, it is well that you come to such a determination well informed. Your mother hastened to the confessional: she will tell you what her conscience dictated to her . . . or what they dictated to her conscience. Your father has consulted with canons and jurists: he will tell you all the laws there are . . . and perhaps the laws that ought to be.

Sol.—And you? . . . What do you say?

Antonio.—I? You wish to know what I advise you?

Sol.—Yes.

Antonio.—You say you wish it . . .

Sol.—I wish it.

Antonio.—Then listen. (*Embraces her tenderly, and kisses her.*) Do you hear? . . . Do you hear? . . .

Sol (Overcome, powerless to resist).—Antonio . . . Antonio . . .

Antonio.—Theirs the reason of conscience, the legal reason; yours and mine, the reason of love. (*Releasing her.*) Decide, Sol, you decide! (*Exit to the left.*)

SCENE XIII

SOL and PRIMITIVA, (*at the back.*)

Primitiva.—Madam, His Eminence wishes to see you and has sent for the carriage to bring him here. Do not decide without hearing him, for he knows more than all of them.

Sol (Who has remained motionless and overcome).—They are not right . . .

Primitiva.—Who?

Sol.—They.

Primitiva.—Then who is right?

Sol.—He.

Primitiva.—That's what I said already. And you will see if his Eminence doesn't say the same thing.

SCENE XIV

THE SAME: ESPERANZA and SANTA, (*at the right.*)

Esperanza.—I suppose that you have arranged everything between you.

Primitiva.—The Archbishop has still to give his opinion.

Esperanza.—He, yes; you, no.

Primitiva.—Very well, madam; I shall be much pleased to keep still.

SCENE XV

THE SAME: ACISCLO, ANTERO, TIRSO, FATHER MUIÑOS and ANTONIO, (*at the left.*)

Tirso.—God has listened to us: there will be no scandal.

Aniero.—A word is sufficient to come to an understanding with the Marquis. He agrees to everything and accepts without discussion all that we propose.

Father Muiños.—And which the Marchioness may propose.

Antero.—It is the same thing.

Father Muiños.—I didn't say it to disagree, but to recall to you the words of the Marquis.

Antonio.—Those were my words, Father Muiños.

Antero.—In substance, we have agreed that the children should remain in the possession of their mother and that the Marquis should leave Campanela this very day, promising in writing never to return and to have no communication of any kind with you. As far as the results of this separation go, and as for its being conclusive, it will be the same as death . . . Do you agree to it? . . .

Antonio.—Yes. If she commands it.

Antero.—And you say, Marchioness?

Esperanza.—That we accept . . .

Santa (*Rushing to SOL.*)—Oh, no! You will not accept that!

Sol.—Why not, Santa?

Santa.—Because it is the uncertainty that is horrible! Because there is no suffering that can be compared to that of expecting a grief that does not come today, but that will

come tomorrow . . . or the next day . . . or the next . . . No! Not that!

Sol.—What then?

Santa.—I don't know. Pardon each other . . .

Tirso.—No!

Esperanza.—No!

Santa.—No? Then kill yourselves. But all at once, all at once! Do not go on living a life of absence. Remember me, Sol, remember me!

Sol.—All my life like you? Oh, how terrible! (*Embraces SANTA in despair.*)

Antero.—Of course it would be preferable to settle matters permanently, but as it is impossible for us to do so, the only way is that which we propose, since unfortunately the marriage is void.

Sol.—No . . .

Esperanza.—What are you saying?

Tirso.—Are you mad?

Antero.—There is a primary error that invalidates everything . . .

Sol.—No, there is no error . . .

Acisclo.—It is evident!

Sol (*Releasing herself now from SANTA.*)—No . . . none, none, none!

Tirso.—Sol!

Esperanza.—Sol!

Acisclo.—You, like everyone else, were deceived . . .

Sol.—No, not I. In order to have been deceived it would have been necessary for me to have done something by myself, and everything I did, I did with your consent, and with your approbation, counseled by you and directed by you. If there is an error, it is yours, not mine; and if there is any guilt, it is yours, not mine, not mine!

Esperanza.—Is it possible that you talk that way?

Sol.—Yes, that way. When I felt an affection for this man, I did not allow myself to be carried away by my feelings, nor did I go to him of my own will alone, but I hastened to you. And you, father, and you, mother, you who are everything on earth to me, you told me that I could accept this affection with confidence.

Tirso.—That is what we believed.

Sol.—Then if you, who were the only ones to guide me, believed it, I committed no error, I did not!

Antonio (*Embracing FATHER MUIÑOS*).—Life struggles with death, Father Muiños! . . .

Sol.—But this was not enough, and I, my parents and I, we hastened to the Judge in order that he might legalize our position; and the Judge told me that we could marry with the full guarantees of the law.

Acisclo.—It seemed to us that the documents were all right . . .

Sol.—Well, if we consulted you and it seemed so to you, I committed no error, I did not! But still that was not enough! . . . And authorized by my parents and legalized by the Court, still we wished that the Church should sanctify it. And as the Judge told me: "in the name of the law . . .", the Cardinal said to me "in the name of God, you are married, Sol de San Payo . . ."

Antero.—We were ignorant of the impediment . . .

Sol.—We were ignorant, we were ignorant! And is that sufficient reason for breaking up a family, to tell me that you were ignorant, when it is your duty to know? . . . Now when I have my life established, my love consecrated and children in the world, now you come to me and say that there is an article 32 or 332, that annuls everything? Oh, no! Against that I rebel!

Tirso.—Sol!

Esperanza.—My daughter!

Sol.—You were mistaken before . . . Who can guarantee to me that you may not be mistaken again? Who? (And if I obey and afterwards it should be shown that you are mistaken . . . Who among you would give back to me the happy life that we now cast into the ditch and the mud? . . .) Who? Who?

Antero.—Unfortunately there is no doubt whatever.

Sol.—Neither was there before.

Acisclo.—And the law is very plain.

Sol.—So it was before.

Tirso.—Do not argue, Sol . . .

Sol.—No, I shall not; you may argue it, but meanwhile, I shall not leave in pawn my life and my love. Antonio, defend me!

Antonio.—Sol! (*Protecting her and drawing her aside*) Mine you were and mine you shall be again . . . Leave her to me for pity's sake! . . .

Esperanza (To Tirso).—Tirso, Tirso.

Tirso.—Esperanza!

Esperanza.—We remain in sin . . . May the Lord grant us time for repentance. . .

Tirso.—Amen . . .

Acisclo.—It is too bad that you should put yourselves beyond the pale of the law . . .

Sol.—Beyond the pale of the law?

Antonio.—Do not fear; the world is large and other laws will protect us.

Primitiva.—Will it not give her pain to leave her dear home?

Sol.—My home?

Antonio.—And will not your home be wherever you shall find love and peace?

Sol.—My children?

Tirso.—And if you take them with you, what will you say to them of us?

Sol.—My children, Antonio?

Antonio.—You can tell them that a little farther away, crossing only a frontier, they will find father and mother and a legal and honorable situation.

Antero.—They will not have it! Legal, yes; honorable, no; christian, no. And you will always be outcasts . . . And some day your children will accuse you of living in sin!

Sol.—Living in sin, no! Put the anathema upon me and upon my children, no. I wish for your peace! I wish for your peace! And I wish also for the death which you give us with them! (*Throwing herself disconsolately into the arms of Doña Esperanza.*) I obey, mother. Tell him to leave Campanela.

Antonio.—And now the claws have fastened themselves! Mercy, Father Muinos!

Father Muinos (Embracing him).—Be resigned, my son.

Esperanza.—God comes to our aid. Let us bless and praise him. (*A shot.*)

Sol.—Antonio! Antonio!

Antero.—He has killed himself!

Acisclo.—He has killed himself!

Sol.—No; you have killed him.

Antonio.—You, who give to Humanity only a formula for

death, to Humanity that asks for a formula for life . . .
and Humanity wishes . . . wish . . .

Sol.—Antonio!

Antonio.—Wishes to live . . . to li . . . to . . .

(Dies.)

Sol.—Antonio! Antonio! Live! Live!

Esperanza (*Wishing to separate her from him*).—*Sol!*

Tirso.—Daughter!

Primitiva.—Madam!

Sol.—Away all of you! All! Oh, God, he and I are
sufficient to each other in death! Who knows if we would
not have been sufficient to each other in life!

Esperanza.—*Sol!*

Sol.—Antonio! Antonio!

Father Muiños.—*Si sic dispositus ego te absol . . .*

Antero (*Interrupting the blessing*) . . . —No!

Father Muiños (*Gently, but with firmness*).—Yes, yes
. . . *Ego te absolvo in nomine Patri et Filii et Spiritu Sancto*

*Slow curtain, which begins to fall at the first “Ego Te
Absolvo.”*

THE WOMEN'S TOWN

(*Puebla de las Mujeres*)

A Comedy in Two Acts, in Prose

BY SERAFÍN AND JOAQUÍN ALVAREZ QUINTERO

*Played for the first time in the Teatro Lara of Madrid,
January 17, 1912.*

PERSONS

DON JULIAN, *the village priest.*

SANTITA, *the deaf sister.*

ADOLFO, *the young lawyer and hero.*

DEGUILLA, *the servant of Santita.*

CONCHA PUERTO, *the town gossip.*

GULTARRA, *the servant of Concha.*

ANGELA } PILAR } *daughters of Santita.*

PEPE LORA, *the rejected suitor.*

JUANITA, *the rosebud of the town.*

DOÑA BELEN, *the aunt of Juanita.*

CECILIO, *the dean of doctors.*

THE SACRISTAN OF SAN ANTONIO.

Players are named in order of their entrance.

ACT I

A small town in Spain. The house of the priest, Don Julian. Afternoon in mid-summer.

ACT II

Same Scene. Evening ten days later.

TIME—THE PRESENT

ACT I

There is in the houses of many Andalusian towns an open space where one enters on passing through the grating of the front door, a comfortable and familiar spot which serves in the place of a patio and a reception hall, as well, without really attaining to such high dignity. In this cosy enclosure, cool and pleasant, and in the house of our good friend, DON JULIAN FIGUEREDO, parish priest of the Women's Town, the events of this comedy take place.

At the right of the actor, midway back, stands open the front door grating, of simple iron-work, and leading to the vestibule. At the left, in the center of the wall, a glass door, with a round arch above, also of glass. In the rear a large door, similar to this one, but of three panels. Behind this door is seen a garden with whitewashed walls and red brick walks, a few trees and a number of blooming plants, the pots all painted blue.

Beside the front grating, at the front, and fixed in the white wall, a china closet or kind of sideboard with doors entirely of glass. In it is kept, together with other more or less useful stuff, the fine and dainty table service that is used only on special occasions.

A vaulted ceiling; floor of red tile.

Little furniture and very plain; a lamp stand, a hat rack, two rockers and some old cane chairs. On the walls some unassuming pictures and a couple of photograph racks of plaited straw. Above the front grating an image of the Virgin that is venerated in the town, beneath which is fastened on the wall a dry olive branch.

It is night and in the month of June. Hanging from the ceiling in the center of the room, a large lamp, lighted.

DON JULIAN and SANTITA, comfortably seated, show in their attitudes the most profound peacefulness. DON JULIAN is consulting a list of lottery drawings, seeking in it in vain two numbers which he has been playing. SANTITA is rolling cigarettes for DON JULIAN with a machine. They are brother and sister and both are more than sixty and less than sixty-five years of age. DON JULIAN hears all that there is to be heard, since he confesses most of the women in the town, and SANTITA hears

absolutely nothing for she is deaf. Her manner just the same is one of constant observation and suspicion.

DON JULIAN is in his cassock and wears a silk cap with a visor, to protect his venerable bald head from the cold and from the flies and mosquitos. SANTITA wears a black dress.

Don Julian.—Well! Not a single thirteen thousand five hundred! That's always my luck! I shall always be poor Let's see the other.

(*Behind the scenes, in the distance, in the kitchen, the youngest and most mischievous of the servants of the house, DIEGUILLA, bursts out singing. DON JULIAN stops his task and listens. Pretty soon SANTITA notices it.*)

Dieguilla (*Singing*).— To pass some happy hours,
I fain would think of thee,
For thou art among my lovers,
The best of all, I see.

Santita (*In the middle of the stanza*).—What's that? Is that witch singing?

Don Julian.—No.

Santita.—Yes. I can see it by your face. The fandango of her village, isn't it? (*She leaves the cigarettes and goes through the garden to the left to stop DIEGUILLA's singing.*)

Don Julian.—The Lord be praised! She is the only one that does not hear her and the only one that is bothered by her singing. Certainly Dieguilla is a little cricket, a little cricket . . .

(*The stanza of DIEGUILLA stops short as she is repeating one of the lines. SANTITA returns satisfied.*)

Santita.—She thinks she is still in her village inn.

Don Julian (*Raising a little his voice by instinct, not because he expects his sister to hear him.*)—She will leave, too, just like the other one, and all the rest.

Santita.—What?

Don Julian.—I say that she will leave too!

Santita (*Understanding him as always and as everybody else by his gestures and the movement of his lips*).—Let her go!

. . . Popular songs cannot be sung in a priest's house. (*Goes back to her work.*)

Don Julian (*After looking in the list for the other number*).—Well, sir; well, well! It must be that the list is wrong. This seven must be a four. (*Pause. There appears through the*

front-grating, ADOLFO ADALID, hero of this play. He is a youth from Madrid, neat and correct in dress. He speaks with natural ease.)

Adolfo.—May I come in?

Don Julian (Rising to receive him).—Certainly. Come in, my friend, come in.

Adolfo.—And how do you do?

Don Julian.—Very well, and you?

Adolfo.—Do you know me?

Don Julian.—Why shouldn't I know you, my boy? It has been a week since you alighted from the coach in the plaza. And I have been expecting this visit for some time. I am going to present you to my sister. She is deaf, poor girl, but you don't need to raise your voice; she understands what one is talking about by the movement of the lips. Santita.

Santita.—Sir . . .

Adolfo.—Madam . . .

Don Julian.—This is the nephew of Esperanza Lucena.

Santita.—Yes, yes, I know who he is. He goes by here every day three times up the street and four times down. My daughters have told me about it.

Adolfo.—I haven't counted the times, but I go by here quite often.

Don Julian.—Well, then you might have come in some of them, you rascal. Sit down.

Adolfo.—Thank you very much. (*Both sit down.*)

Don Julian.—I have been asking myself if this fellow from Madrid didn't want anything from the parish priest of the Women's Town.

Adolfo.—Quite the contrary; because I do want a good deal, and because I have to trouble you, and not a little, I hesitated about coming right away.

Don Julian.—You will not trouble me at all, my son.

Adolfo.—You are very kind, sir. And I must tell you that my aunt has been saying every day, over and over, that I ought to come.

Don Julian.—I am sure of it. Your aunt and I were very old friends.

Adolfo.—She has great confidence in you. Will you smoke?

Don Julian.—Thank you, let us smoke.

(ADOLFO gives him cigarettes and both smoke. SANTITA on seeing them brings an ash tray and a cuspidor. Afterwards making as if to go and turn the screen, she gets behind Adolfo and looks him over, even takes his hat and examines it inside and out.)

Adolfo.—My poor uncle by marriage left all his papers badly mixed up.

Don Julian.—Yes, my son; I am aware of it. May God have pardoned him. He didn't amount to much, though may my words not offend his memory. He was a madcap and a gay fellow.

Adolfo.—My aunt, poor woman, after the first days of mourning were over, wrote me to Madrid begging me for Heaven's sake to come and put his business in order. And you may imagine that I could do nothing else than comply with her wishes. I am so very fond of her . . .

Don Julian.—I know it, my son, I know it.

Adolfo.—And besides, the papers of my uncle are not things easily understood and that can be put in the hands of a person in whom one does not have entire confidence. I shall try to fulfill my commission the best I can and especially to leave my aunt tranquil without the possibility of lawsuits or other entanglements.

Don Julian.—That's right, my son, that's right. You have quite a long task.

Adolfo.—For a month and a half or two months, I figure. It is a good thing that it is summer and in Madrid everything is at a standstill and one is not missed.

Don Julian.—Well, see here, my son . . . and pardon me that I speak familiarly, but I don't know how to be formal with young people . . .

Adolfo.—And it pleases me for you to drop all formality.

Don Julian.—Whatever you may wish, if it is in my power, you have only to ask . . .

Adolfo.—I shall ask, I shall ask enough. You shall have no cause to complain. I am going to begin right now. First, and this to please my aunt, I should like a letter of introduction.

Don Julian.—To whom?

Adolfo.—To . . . I don't remember the name—to the tenant of her estate "La Colmena"

Don Julian.—Oh, yes, Pablo Lobo. A bad fellow that. A rather sly, deceitful, thievish fellow.

Adolfo.—But my aunt says that he has more respect for you than anyone, and that I should not go to see him without a letter from you.

Don Julian.—When are you going to see him?

Adolfo.—Tomorrow, if possible.

Don Julian.—Well then, I will write the letter immediately.

Adolfo.—No, no, don't trouble yourself now. You see, I have to go and see the recorder of the property, who goes to bed early, and I have to consult him about one or two things; then in the meantime, if you will be so kind as to write me these lines I will stop and get them on my way home.

Don Julian.—Very good, sir. I will do it.

Adolfo.—And you will not say that my first visit to the parish priest has not been a selfish one.

Don Julian.—Ha! ha! And the town? How do you like it? Somewhat bored, aren't you?

Adolfo.—No, no, really, I haven't had time yet to be bored. In its tranquil and picturesque appearance it resembles very much the other Andalusian towns that I know. Perhaps a little more sleepy, a little more abandoned and a little more tranquil than some of them.

Don Julian.—Yes, yes. Here there is nothing in constant motion except the church bells and the women's tongues which never stop wagging.

Adolfo.—I can bear witness to the church bells, they wake me up every morning. About the others I don't know yet.

Don Julian.—Well, you will find out.

Adolfo.—What I can't stand, begging your pardon, are the flies. I believe all there are in the province are here.

Don Julian.—That's so, that's so. There are more flies than anywhere. And they do stick and bite. Now they don't bother us for they are all in the dining room, if they weren't, we should be eaten alive! I can't even take off my cap..

Adolfo.—There are not so many mosquitos, are there?

Don Julian.—You wait until July to form your opinion.

Adolfo.—Oh, indeed?

Don Julian.—And they are especially fond of strangers.

Adolfo.—Indeed?

Don Julian.—That can be explained. They know us already, and almost scorn us. Of course! We are common dishes, everyday ones . . . But let some one come from away, and it seems that they say to themselves, "Why, man, we haven't tried this gentleman." And they fall upon him and devour him.

Adolfo.—It is well to know and be on the defensive.
(Rises.)

Don Julian.—Are you going already?

Adolfo.—But I shall come back for the letter. I am going, as I said, to the house of the recorder, who I believe goes to bed with the chickens.

Don Julian.—All right. Well, I'll see you later, then. And I beg you to make yourself at home in my house. It is at your service. Then I will present you to the best in it—my nieces, the daughters of my sister. They are not so bad-looking. And I must tell you that we keep open house at all hours, day and night this door is always open. My nieces' friends, my own friends, they all come . . . Cecilio, the very dean of doctors, a person of fine humor, is an old stand-by.

Adolfo.—I had the pleasure of meeting him soon after I came. He goes and comes much at my aunt's house.

Don Julian.—And here, too. So when you get too bored over your papers, drop in here and feel at home, and perhaps we can amuse you.

Adolfo.—Yes, sir; I shall be much pleased to come.

Don Julian.—Anyway the rumor is about the town already that you have found some diversion.

Adolfo.—What is that?

Don Julian.—That's the rumor. I have told it just as it is.

Adolfo.—I don't know to what you refer.

Don Julian.—It is probably some woman's story. It was told to me.

Sanita.—What?

Don Julian.—I was just telling him what you told me that they told you was said about him.

Sanita.—Oh, yes, that. May it turn out well. Very good taste! Of the very best in the town.

Adolfo.—With all frankness—Don Julian, I don't know of what nor of whom you are talking.

Don Julian.—You don't really? That's the way it is in towns. Well, it seems that it is already considered a fact that a girl who lives on the other side of the street—and who is also accustomed to come here evenings—has turned your head with her pretty eyes.

Adolfo.—Me? Why, I scarcely know anyone! And I have never yet spoken to a single girl here.

Santita. What? You say her aunt is opposed? She is foolish! She is just pretending!

Don Julian.—No, he wasn't talking about the aunt. He says he doesn't even know the niece!

Santita.—Well, you'll find out the truth!

Don Julian.—She doesn't believe it.

Adolfo.—And what do you think I ought to do? I shall see you later, shall I not?

Don Julian.—Good-bye.

Adolfo.—Good-bye, madam.

Santita.—God be with you, sir. (*Exit ADOLFO.*)

Don Julian (To his sister).—He is a nice fellow, isn't he?

Santita.—Yes, yes; he is not bad. She is too good for him, of course. Dieguilla! Dieguilla! (*Takes up the ash tray and with a gesture of repugnance, calls DIEGUILLA.*)

Don Julian.—What is it you wish?

Santita.—That she should come and get this, for I can't stand the smoke it makes. God should have given me a little more hearing and a little less smell. Uf!

(*DIEGUILLA comes in from the garden, wiping her hands on her work apron.*)

Dieguilla.—Did you call, madam?

Santita.—Take and clean this.

Dieguilla.—Yes, ma'am.

Santita.—And bring it back right away.

Dieguilla.—All right, ma'am. Don Julian, one of two things, either you have smoked two cigarettes, one after the other, or a gentleman has been to see you.

Don Julian.—Go on, go on. (*DIEGUILLA goes out humming the fandango, sure of not being reprimanded.*)

Santita.—This girl is very obedient.

(Enter CONCHA PUERTO from the street, accompanied by GUITARRA, her servant. A dramatic author given to symbols would say that CONCHA PUERTO is the incarnation of the spirit of the town; we, who are not, now limit ourselves to saying that

she is a lady, very pretty, very meddlesome, who knows the life and the miracles of everybody.)

Concha.—A very good evening.

Guitarra.—Good evening.

Don Julian.—Good evening, Concha.

Concha.—Good evening, Santita.

Santita.—God be with you.

Concha.—Guitarra, go to the kitchen. I'll call you when we are ready to go.

Guitarra.—All right, madam. (*Exit through the garden.*)

Concha.—I brought Guitarra because I always stay here too long, they put out the street lights and I get back home and find the house as dark as a cellar. I expect I'll get a fright some night. (*Sits down.*) He went out from here?

Don Julian.—What's that?

Concha.—He just left here?

Don Julian.—Who?

Concha.—It seems to me that he just left here?

Don Julian.—But, who?

Concha.—Who do you suppose, Father? The lawyer; the novelty of the town, the nephew of Esperanza Lucena!

Don Julian.—Oh, yes. He just left here, yes. He came to pay his respects . . . to bring me greetings . . .

Concha.—Yes, yes. He didn't get the hour straight. She always comes later.

Don Julian.—What are you talking about, woman?

Concha.—He is a nice fellow, isn't he? This boy?

Don Julian.—Yes, yes, very nice, very pleasant.

Concha.—And a very good boy, they say. With a great future before him. You see already, at his age, that he is a lawyer and what not.

Don Julian.—And what?

Concha.—Yes, I don't remember what. But Bobadilla told me; he is a lawyer and something else. Anyway, Juanita has a piece of luck. He is too good for her. And how are the girls? (*Shouting to the deaf woman.*) And how are the girls?

Santita.—They are in the garden.

Concha.—I am going to call them. We must talk over the affair. (*She gets up a moment and calls the girls from the garden.*) Girls! Girls! Angela! Pilar! I am here! . . .

Don Julian.—And your husband?

Concha.—Having the toothache for a change.

Don Julian.—Heavens! I don't see how he stands it.
Why doesn't he have it out?

Concha.—Because you know well enough how Bobadilla is. He thinks a dentist is an executioner. Oh, Lord! How he is afraid of them! And I assure you he is having a time of it! Is this the list of the drawing?

Don Julian.—Yes. Do you want to look up some number?

DIEGUILLA comes back with the ash tray clean. Puts it on the table, and goes away saying nothing, but looking at both.)

Concha.—Yes, sir. See if you can find 14,525.

Don Julian (*Obeying her*).—14,525. No, it isn't here.

Concha.—I am sorry, for Father Martinez had it. And 7,304?

Don Julian.—7,304? Not a single 7,300.

Concha.—I am glad, for they had it at the drug store.

Don Julian.—But you were playing on them both?

Concha.—No, sir, on neither. But I kept the numbers in my head to know whether they drew anything.

Don Julian.—Ha! ha! (*ANGELA* and *PILAR*, the daughters of *SANTITA*, come in through the garden, girls of twenty and fifteen summers respectively. Enter from the right.)

Pilar.—Hello!

Angela.—Hello!

Concha.—Hello! Have you heard the news?

Pilar.—We have.

Angela.—We have.

Don Julian.—What is the news?

Concha.—What do you suppose? That the lawyer is in love with Juanita la Rosa!

Don Julian.—Oh, pshaw!

Concha.—Pshaw? And that Juanita la Rosa hasn't closed her eyes since she saw him! She was surely smitten.

Don Julian.—You will all go to Hades for being such gossips. It is very true that the lawyer just left here, you saw him as you came . . .

Angela.—Why, was he here?

Pilar.—Was he here?

Don Julian.—Yes, my daughters, he was here . . .

Concha.—He came to pay his respects to your uncle, don't you know?

Don Julian.—That's what the poor fellow came for.

Concha.—Oh, pshaw!

Don Julian.—And I spoke to him incidentally about the rumor that is going about the town, and he declared with the utmost innocence that he didn't even know Juanita.

Concha.—Ha! ha! ha! You are the one to be put on the altar of innocence.

Pilar.—Yes, uncle, you are easy.

Angela.—Says he doesn't know her, and everybody in the town knows that he is crazy about her!

Concha.—Doesn't know her and came to look for her here.

Angela.—And he's coming back?

Don Julian.—Yes, he is coming back, but . . .

Concha.—Ah! But . . . Pippins!

Santita (*Anxious to join in the conversation*).—What's the matter? What gibberish is this?

Concha (*Shouting*).—Don Julian says that the nephew of Esperanza Lucena, the lawyer, doesn't know Juanita la Rosa.

Santita.—Go tell that to the marines!

Concha.—Don't you see?

Pilar.—It's plain enough to me!

Santita.—As for me, I am sure that he came here tonight just on her trail.

Concha.—Don't you see?

Don Julian.—Do I see? Do I see? I see that you are all alike.

Angela.—But, uncle, don't you believe it yet?

Don Julian.—But, niece, what if the party interested has told me himself that he doesn't know her?

Concha.—Well, I tell you that he not only knows her, but that he is smitten with her, and that he is going to write to her.

Don Julian.—Oh, pshaw!

Concha.—Well, explain it then. If he is not in love with her, why has he passed three times today along her street?

Don Julian.—Why, because it is a public street! Is the man going to walk over the roofs?

Concha.—A public street, really? And if he is not going to write to her, why did he buy this morning at the post office a local stamp?

Pilar.—He bought a local stamp?

Angela.—Listen to that!

Don Julian.—But, how do you know? . . .

Concha.—How do I know? Just as everyone knows!

It was an event at the office! Don't you know that it is all over town in five minutes when a man buys a local stamp? Come, come! You are green! . . .

Angela.—Gullible, sure enough, uncle!

Don Julian.—Hush, some one is coming.

Concha (*Almost guessing by the scent who is coming and making the announcement with great mystery and interest*).—Ah! Pepe Lora!

Pilar.—Pepe Lora?

Concha.—Pepe Lora!

Angela.—Pepe Lora!

Pilar (*To her uncle*).—Pepe Lora! (*It is indeed PEPE LORA who enters. PEPE LORA is a dark, suspicious youth, slow in talk. Wears a sack coat and a broad brimmed hat.*)

Pepe.—Good evening, Don Julian and the company.

Don Julian.—Good evening, Pepe. (*The two ladies and the girls reply to his salutation.*)

Pepe.—Do you happen to have the Daily?

Don Julian.—The Daily? Girls, the Daily!

Pilar.—The Daily? It was here half an hour ago.

Angela.—Yes, but I think they came for it from the house of Piña.

Concha.—No, for they had already had it at Piña's. I just came from there myself.

Pepe.—My mother has been reading the serial and she wanted the continuation.

Angela.—Don't you know where it must be? At Victoria's.

Pilar.—Yes, but Victoria has asked for it, too.

Concha.—If it is not at Victoria's, they have it across the street. And if not, it is at my house.

Don Julian.—Well, now you are on the trail, my son.

Pepe.—Yes, sir. I shall go across the street first.

Don Julian.—And when your mother reads it, don't fail to return it to me, you hear?

Pepe.—But haven't you read it yet?

Don Julian.—I, yes, but I want to wrap it up and send it to my brother Ramon, who, as he is acquainted with the town . . .

Pepe.—Oh, yes. I'll bring it back sure. Good-bye, and thank you very much. (*Exit.*)

Don Julian.—Good-bye.

Concha.—Good-bye. (*Scarcely has PEPE left when we have the interpretation of the visit.*)

Angela.—It was rather clever for him to come to look for the Daily here.

Don Julian.—Eh?

Concha.—The Daily was the excuse, but the real reason was to find out whether she was here.

Don Julian.—Who?

Concha.—Juanita.

Pilar.—Of course he came for that.

Don Julian.—But what has he to do with Juanita now?

Pilar.—Why shouldn't he have something when he used to be her lover?

Don Julian.—What of it? Didn't they fall out?

Angela.—Yes, they did, but you know he was much put out that she jilted him, and swore over and over that he would never allow her to have another lover.

Pilar.—And he is standing by it, too. He just about frightened Manolo Corrales away.

Concha.—I am going to see what he is up to. (*Goes out quickly.*)

Don Julian.—Well, sir, just see if I don't lose my senses, and these chatterboxes will be to blame for it. (*Exit through the garden.*) *CONCHA PUERTO* comes back hurriedly.)

Concha.—Pepe Lora is going down the street talking to himself.

Angela.—Eh?

Concha.—And can't you guess what I saw?

Pilar.—What?

Concha.—Inocencio Parra, across the street there, in the balcony, whistling a ditty to his parrot, and in white trousers.

Angela.—In white trousers?

Concha.—In white trousers! And it is just three months since his wife died.

Angela.—Ave Maria!

Pilar.—How shameful!

Angela.—But is it really possible? (*Goes rapidly to see and comes back horrified.*)

Concha.—You see whether it is or not! They don't wear

mourning in this town now! No need to show one's grief!

Angela.—How awful! How awful! Go look, Pilar, it is worth seeing.

Pilar (Going to see).—The idea, in white trousers!

Concha.—And in my house we kept the door half closed for a week!

Pilar.—It's something one sees and can't believe! That man is not right in his mind!

Santita (Mad with curiosity).—Well, what are you coming and going for, girls?

Concha.—Unbelievable, madam! Inocencio Parra, in the balcony, amusing himself with the parrot, and in white trousers!

Santita.—In the name of the Father! That cannot be!
(Rises quickly and goes to see with her own eyes.)

Angela.—He's a shameless one, as my uncle says.

Concha.—Shameless! Such things make Bobadilla indignant. He still wears crape for his first wife! And I respect him for it.

Santita (Crossing herself after having seen the neighbor).—What shamelessness, sir, what shamelessness! Then they expect it to rain! God has to punish us! Of course, if he were the one who had died, she would be in the balcony in a colored kimono.

Concha.—Of course, that's the excuse the men have!

Santita.—And here is Juanita la Rosa.

Angela.—Juanita la Rosa?

Pilar.—Is she coming here?

Concha.—With her aunt?

Santita.—With her aunt.

Angela.—Then listen; let's act as if we knew nothing of the affair.

Pilar.—That's right; yes, for the aunt might be opposed.

Angela.—And she, too, might think we envy her. Nothing, nothing, we know nothing about it, nor shall we say a single word.

Concha.—It will be hard work for me, but I'll do it!

Santita.—What are you planning?

Angela.—Not going to let on we know anything about the lawyer to Doña Belen nor to Juanita.

Santita.—That is a good idea. Let them turn the conversation that way if they wish!

(They sit down and await the arrival of the heroine, satisfied with their resolution and adopting an indifferent air. Soon appear DOÑA BELEN and her pretty niece, JUANITA LA ROSA. Both wear shawls. DOÑA BELEN is a mild, circumspect lady, who is fond of her kind. She pronounces correctly, almost without opening her mouth, and when she finishes a speech of peculiar importance, she sucks in air through her closed teeth as if to emphasize it more. Always speaks with a patronizing smile. JUANITA has a gentle and modest way of talking, but Andalusian, of course. It is probable that she will please the lawyer when he sees her, supposing of course that he has not seen her.)

Dona Belen (*In the doorway, low to her niece*).—From us, not a word.

Juanita.—Certainly not.

Doña Belen.—Good evening to you all.

Juanita.—Good evening.

Concha.—Good evening.

Angela.—Hello, Juanita.

Juanita.—Hello, Pilar.

Pilar.—How pretty you look, my dear.

Doña Belen.—How are you, Santita?

Santita.—Very well, thank you.

Doña Belen.—And Bobadilla, Concha?

Concha.—Still with his toothache.

Doña Belen.—Too bad, too bad!

Concha.—And Pepe?

Doña Belen.—Who?

Concha.—Your husband.

Doña Belen.—Ah, José. All right; in the country.
(They all sit down. Look at one another smiling.)

Concha.—That's the dress you were going to wear on the day of the Virgin?

Juanita.—Yes, it is. But I thought I would put it on today.

Doña Belen.—One day is as good as another.

Concha.—Of course!

Angela.—It is very fine, isn't it?

Pilar.—Very pretty.

Juanita.—Very simple. I made it myself.

Doña Belen.—Oh, yes. For I think the finest education ought not to neglect the needle. (*Sucks in air.*)

Concha.—We don't need to be convinced of that. It goes without saying.

Doña Belen.—I don't know what you mean.

Concha.—Nothing. I, nothing. (*New silence.*)

Juanita (*Appealing to the inevitable theme in such cases.*).—It is very cool today, don't you think so?

Concha.—So, so, fancy. (*Fans herself with impatience, very warm. SANTITA blows on the tobacco machine, attracting the attention of all, who smile again.*)

Santita.—This gets stopped up.

Doña Belen.—Stopped up, eh? (*DIEGUILLA begins to sing the same air as before.*)

Angela.—Listen how well Dieguilla sings.

Pilar.—It is a new fandango of her village.

Juanita.—I think she sings very nicely. (*All listen. SANTITA notices from their faces that something is happening and goes again to stop DIEGUILLA.*)

Santita.—She is determined that I shall send her away.

Angela.—There goes mama.

Juanita.—But why does it bother her?

Angela.—She doesn't like to have the servants sing. Yesterday she sent Catalina off for the same thing.

Doña Belen.—She is quite right. I admire her taste.

Concha.—But the funny thing is that she is the only one that doesn't hear her! (*They all laugh mechanically; their minds are not on it. SANTITA comes back and continues with her cigarettes. Again there is the silence of a tomb.*)

Juanita (*Sighing*).—Ay, ay, ay, ay!

Angela.—Sighing?

Juanita.—No, but as we were not saying anything

Pilar.—Really, my dear, in the town everything is talked out.

Doña Belen.—Yes, there is almost nothing to talk about.

Angela.—Almost. (*Another shorter pause.*)

Concha.—Today is Thursday.

Juanita.—Yes, Thursday.

Doña Belen.—Yes, it is Thursday. Yesterday was Wednesday.

Concha.—Then today must be Thursday. (*Silence becomes somewhat tragic.*)

Santita. What are you talking about?

Concha.—About nothing. (*All make signs of the same.*)

Santita.—Still about nothing?

Doña Belen.—We are not talking much at all.

Concha.—Outwardly.

Doña Belen.—What do you mean by outwardly?

Concha.—But we know what each one is thinking to herself.

Juanita.—I, nothing bad. (*Silence again.* ANGELA hums the servant's air.)

Concha (*Bursting out suddenly*).—Well, so far and no farther. I can't stand it any longer. It isn't my temperament!

Doña Belen.—What do you say?

Juanita.—What do you mean?

Concha.—What do I mean? What do I mean? Do you want me to regale your ears, really? Here we are six women dying to talk about the same thing, and the whole six of us talking nonsense. I can't stand it! Has he written to you? (*General laughter.*)

Santita.—Has the cork blown out at last?

Doña Belen.—I knew they would joke you and that's the reason I wanted to stay at home tonight.

Concha.—Let's talk frankly.

Angela.—Did he write to you?

Juanita.—Who should write to me? For goodness' sake!

Pilar.—Didn't he write to you?

Juanita.—No.

Concha.—Then what did he do with the stamp?

Juanita.—I cannot let you talk about this as a serious matter, I really mean it. I don't know where all this hubbub started. This fellow and I haven't even spoken to each other; I haven't even met him face to face.

Pilar.—Oh, pshaw!

Juanita.—It is the gospel truth. I don't think he has seen me but once, and that was, I think, the day after he came here.

Concha.—He came on the eighteenth.

Juanita.—Well, then it must have been on the nineteenth. He was going in the direction of the Club, with the recorder. I was coming back from the Robles' house and as he passed by me he stopped and looked at me, and I thought I heard

him say: "My, what a pretty girl!" Now you see what a good look he got at me! That is all. No more nor less, no less nor more. I have never seen him since, nor has he seen me, and I don't imagine he has given a thought to my insignificant self.

Concha.—Oh, nonsense! You can't stuff us that way!

Pilar.—I should say not!

Angela.—We are not such gumps.

Concha.—I'd like to know how such a talk started in the town, if that was all!

Doña Belen.—Well, I assure you, Concha, on the word of a gentleman—lady, I mean—that Juanita has told it all exactly as it is, and if it is true, as they say, that this young fellow has gone by our house to see her, that's his affair, for I assure you that, on her part, she has not even gone to the window to see him pass, nor has she done a single thing to occasion this talk. The mother of Juanita, as you know, was a perfect lady; her father, a perfect gentleman; and her uncle and aunt, when they took her and educated her, took especial care that she should be a perfect lady also. (*Sucks in air.*)

Concha.—That's all right, but it doesn't prevent some one falling in love with her. (*Renewed laughter.*)

Doña Belen.—This Concha always gets the better of the argument. Juanita.

Juanita.—Aunt.

Doña Belen.—Say the verse for them that you composed about this.

Juanita.—Oh, no, aunt!

Angela.—Go on, do, please, for I like your verses so much.

Pilar.—What is it? What is it?

Concha.—Say it.

Juanita.—Well, if you wish, but you know that I don't like to say my verses. In a girl such things are criticized. And you know this town.

Angela.—But, my dear, it is all in confidence here.

Juanita.—Well then, I'll say it. After all, the verses are nonsense:

I love him not, nor he loves me,
Nor naught of him I know;
But if the town will have it so,
Persistent must they be.

(Great laughter and some applause.)

Doña Belen.—It is all right, isn't it?

Juanita.—A mere trifle.

Angela.—No, dear, it is very pretty.

Pilar.—Yes it is, very pretty.

Concha.—And especially it is *a propos*.

Santita.—What was it? What was it?

Angela.—A fine verse!

Santita (*Thinking that it is a question of DIEGUILLA again, rises decided to dismiss her at once*).—The idea! She thinks she can impose on me! I'll send her off at once as I did the other one. Even if I have to do the scrubbing myself! (*Goes toward the kitchen.*)

Angela.—Where are you going, mama?

Santita.—To send that brazen-face off!

Angela.—Why, Dieguilla is not singing! It is Juanita who has just said a verse for us.

Santita.—Ah! Such boldness was just attracting my attention!

(*Renewed laughter. DON JULIAN enters from the garden.*)

Don Julian.—Hello, hello! The club is quite animated!

Doña Belen.—Good evening, Don Julian.

Don Julian.—God be with you, my daughter. (*To JUANITA.*) And with you, Rosebud of the town.

Juanita.—Thank you, Father.

Don Julian.—But why don't you go out in the garden for a while, or out to the door. It is such a pretty night.

Angela.—Uncle is right; let's go to the door.

Juanita.—Let's go, yes, let's go.

Doña Belen.—As you like.

Concha.—I'll go with you, but first I am going to the kitchen to tell Guitarra to run home a minute and see how Bobadilla's toothache is. I hope I shall not have to go home and change the bandage for him. (*Goes out through the garden towards the left.*)

Santita.—Where is Concha Puerto going?

Angela.—To find out about Bobadilla's tooth.

Santita.—Bobadilla is kept pretty busy between the toothache and Concha Puerto! (*Unexpectedly and concealing his presence, PEPE LORA comes to bring back the Daily. JUANITA on seeing him becomes serious.*)

Pepe.—Good evening.

Doña Belen.—Good evening.

Pepe.—Don Julian, here you have the Daily.

Don Julian.—Thank you very much, my son. But has your mother read the serial?

Pepe.—Yes, sir. And I have seen what I wanted. Good evening.

Don Julian.—Good night.

Doña Belen.—Good evening. (*PEPE LORA goes out, looking with meaning at Juanita, who avoids the look.*)

Angela.—Now the bull is in the ring!

Don Julian.—What a little ass the fellow is, what an ass!

Juanita.—Well now, if this little fool thinks that because we were a little silly when we were children, that I am never going to take fancy to any other man, he is very much mistaken.

Pilar.—Of course!

Angela.—He ought to be shown!

Doña Belen.—I should say he is mistaken. My husband will take a hand in the matter.

Santita.—Oh, the thing will not be serious; nothing to worry over.

Angela.—Mama is right. Let's go to the door.

Juanita.—Yes, let's go and enjoy the coolness of the evening. (*She goes to the street with ANGELA and both take the chairs they have occupied.*)

Pilar (*Following them.*)—I am not going to take a chair; I'll sit on the doorstep.

(*SANTITA during this dialogue has gathered up her work tools and put them in the closet. Afterwards goes with the girls to the street, taking her chair, also.*)

Santita.—And aren't you coming out, Belen?

Doña Belen.—Yes, I'm coming right away. (*As soon as SANTITA disappears.*) Don Julian, a minute!

Don Julian.—What is it, my daughter?

Doña Belen.—You can't imagine what an effect Pepe Lora's coming had on me.

Don Julian.—Yes, the same on all of us.

Doña Belen.—It seems as if he were determined to let us know that he still insists on preventing even by force that my niece should have another lover. I should be grateful if you would reprove this ill-advised youth . . .

Don Julian.—I shall, I shall. Only I think it is rather soon yet.

Dona Belen.—Soon? Oh, Father! You never were twenty!

Don Julian.—Why wasn't I?

Doña Belen.—As far as love goes, I mean.

Don Julian.—Oh, to be sure. But now that I am more than sixty, I repeat that I think it is rather early to say anything to Pepe Lora. As long as it isn't plain whether the lawyer is thinking seriously of your niece or not . . . And really he was just here a half hour ago and declared to me that he didn't even know her by sight.

Dona Belen.—Oh, no. Well, that is not strictly correct—know her, well, he does, in a way.

Don Julian.—Hush, here he comes.

Doña Belen.—What a fortunate chance!

(Through the right, from the garden, come ADOLFO and DON CECILIO. DON CECILIO, dean of the doctors of the Women's Town, is a person very discreet and clever.)

Don Julian.—Man, man; a house with two doors is hard to watch!

Don Cecilio.—We came in through the court to steal your oranges. Good evening, Doña Belen.

Doña Belen.—Good evening, Doctor.

Adolfo.—Don Julian, here I am back. Madam . . .

Don Julian (Presenting DOÑA BELEN).—Doña Belen Zurita.

Dona Belen.—Pardon me, you forgot something, Father.

Don Julian.—Wife of Gomez Valdivieso.

Adolfo.—So pleased . . .

Don Julian.—Don Adolfo Adalid.

Doña Belen.—Much pleased. I am a great friend of your aunt. I am congratulating ourselves on your stay in the Women's Town. Guests as distinguished as yourself honor us by their presence.

Adolfo.—Madam, I beg you . . . I am the one who is honored by being received in this manner.

Doña Belen.—I am delighted to meet you.

Adolfo.—The pleasure is all mine.

Doña Belen.—Good-bye Cecilio.

Don Cecilio.—Good-bye, madam. (DOÑA BELEN goes out to the street, turning back with a smile to the group.)

Don Julian (*To ADOLFO, who looks at her curiously*).—
That is the aunt.

Adolfo.—What aunt?

Don Julian.—The aunt of . . .

Adolfo.—Of whom?

Don Julian.—And she is out at the door.

Adolfo.—Who?

Don Julian.—She! What a chance! . . .

Adolfo.—Oh, the idea! I didn't see the point!

Don Cecilio.—Man, it is true; for my daughters have told me that you are keeping pretty close after her.

Adolfo.—No, sir, no. It is a rumor that absolutely lacks foundation.

Don Cecilio.—I tell it to you just as I heard it, my young friend.

Adolfo.—You know, *Don Julian*, I told you before that I had never seen the girl, and I was mistaken.

Don Julian.—So? You were?

Adolfo.—Yes, sir. At the recorder's where they talked to me about the same thing, his wife described to me who the young lady is. I did see her one day going along the street with some people. She seemed to me quite pretty, I must say.

Don Julian.—Oh, yes, she is pretty. And very serious and very clever . . . I am going to get you that letter.

Adolfo.—Too bad to trouble you . . . But it is that my aunt wishes . . .

Don Julian.—Don't mention it, my son . . . (*Goes out at the door at the left*.)

Don Cecilio.—Good, *Adolfo*, now we are alone, and a propos of what they are talking about: Don't marry!

Adolfo.—How is that?

Don Cecilio.—Don't marry, my boy, don't marry!

Adolfo.—But, whoever thought of such a thing?

Don Cecilio.—It is a piece of advice from a friend who is acquainted with matrimony . . . and with this town. Don't marry!

Adolfo.—You may rest easy, for I am not going to. I have come here for a very different purpose.

Don Cecilio.—Well, you want to keep your eyes open.

Adolfo.—The idea! (*GUITARRA comes out from the garden and passes by the front grating, saying the following*:

Guitarra.—We were having a good time here singing real low, and now I must go and see how her husband's toothache is. Well, good night.

Don Cecilio.—Good night.

Adolfo.—Good night. Who is that?

Don Cecilio.—That is Concha Puerto's servant. Do you know Concha Puerto?

Adolfo.—Yes, sir, I have met her at several different houses. A lady somewhat officious and quite a talker.

Don Cecilio.—Take care! And somewhat worse!

Adolfo.—Worse?

Don Cecilio.—Yes, for if Concha Puerto takes a notion, you will marry here.

Adolfo.—Ha! You are joking.

Don Cecilio.—No, I'm not joking, because exactly the same thing happened to me with her mother, who was just like her. So it is no joke.

Adolfo.—But I'd like to see them do it to me!

Don Cecilio.—They insisted on marrying me, and I married.

Adolfo.—But what an aversion you have to matrimony!

Don Cecilio.—My friend, I am suffering from the wound. It is one of the few things, and such a serious one, that I have done in my life, I will not say against my will—but driven to it by the whole town. This is a town in which women rule and command. Here a person can do nothing except what they choose.

Adolfo.—Is it perhaps because men are lacking?

Don Cecilio.—Partly for that, but partly, too, because there is no way of opposing the things they take into their heads. There are few men and those there are, are ruined—that is a fact. At twenty they have become stupid—used up with idleness and spreeing. And it is plain that the women dominate; they have more intelligence and more heart, and a desire to talk incessantly at all hours . . . And there isn't anyone who can get ahead of them.

Adolfo.—I imagine it is somewhat that way everywhere.

Don Cecilio.—Perhaps; but I can tell you that there has not been a critical moment in the history of this town that the women have not been the heroines. That's how the town gets its name. So you had better keep your eyes wide open, as I warned you just now.

Adolfo.—It really makes me laugh, this alarm which you wish to inspire in me, just because I have seen a girl on the street and they have made up their minds to say that I am in love with her.

Don Cecilio.—That's the way I began.

Adolfo.—What?

Don Cecilio.—I say that's the way I began. When I came here as a doctor, thirty-five years ago, I hadn't been here but three days when the hubbub began: "Well, doctor you didn't do a thing but come here and get stuck!" "Fine taste you have, doctor!" "I?" "You, you, don't try to pretend. We know already that you have picked out So-and-So . . ." "Why, I don't even know her!" "You say you don't know her?" "No, I don't know her!" "Tell us that you don't know her!" And so on until I really was anxious to know her!

Adolfo.—I don't doubt it.

Don Cecilio.—It is the same thing that will happen to you.

Adolfo.—I don't doubt that either. I already have a certain curiosity . . .

Don Cecilio.—Oh!

Adolfo.—A certain curiosity in wishing to meet this young lady.

Don Cecilio.—Oh! You are caught. They will get you acquainted; they will arrange an engagement party for you; they will offer you Concha Puerto's balcony to do your courting, and they will settle for you the date of the wedding. Those are the proceedings.

Adolfo (Breaks out laughing).—Ha! ha! ha!

Don Cecilio.—Laugh, laugh as much as you like. Just as they may take a notion, you will see yourself impelled by an irresistible force and you will go wherever they may wish. You cannot turn back!

Adolfo.—But, doctor . . .

Don Cecilio.—But, my dear lawyer, look at me. Would you take me for a bullfighter, perhaps?

Adolfo.—You?

Don Cecilio.—Well, I did fight in the bull ring in this town! Those ladies took it into their noddles that I should fight, and I did! It was for a cloak for the Virgin, it was for charity, or for the poor, or on account of the long drouth . . . They arranged an amateur fight, and I fought in it!

Adolfo.—I don't think I shall get that far.

Don Cecilio.—If not, it will be because they do not wish it! Do you imagine I ever thought of bullfighting? I never was more afraid in my life! You can't imagine how much bigger an animal looks every step he takes nearer to you!

Adolfo.—What do you think if I would practice a while with my aunt's big Newfoundland dog?

Don Cecilio.—Well, you can take it all as a joke!

(Enter SANTITA from the front grating, followed by a girl.)

Santita.—Yes, the doctor is here. (To ADOLFO.) Hello? You came in through the garden?

Adolfo.—Yes, madam.

Santita (Lowering her voice).—Then you missed seeing what there is at the door.

Adolfo.—Ha! ha!

Santita.—Doctor, this girl is asking for you. (Goes out through the garden.)

Don Cecilio.—What is the matter, child?

Girl.—It's my sister, she is sick.

Don Cecilio.—Dear me! And who is your sister?

Girl.—Why, the daughter of José.

Don Cecilio.—And who is José?

Girl.—Why, José is my father.

Don Cecilio (To ADOLFO who smiles).—I guess you have found out now who the sister is. And now who is your father, for I don't see yet.

Girl.—Oh, dear! You say you don't see. Why, who do you suppose my father is? The one who has the grindstones.

Don Cecilio.—Of course, it couldn't be anyone else. Well, what is the matter with your sister?

Girl.—She got insulted. She quarreled with her sweetheart and he insulted her.

Don Cecilio.—Probably, after they both insulted each other.

Girl.—No, sir. My sister was very careful. It seems he took a few cups too much and he insulted my sister. And my mother told me: "Go for Don Cecilio and see if he can't come." At your house they told me you might be at Doña Madalena's and at her house they told me you might be here. And so I came.

Don Cecilio.—Well, I'll go right away. It is nothing serious. Where do you live?

Girl.—Why, just beyond the corner of the ditch, in that little street.

Don Cecilio.—There are two little streets there.

Girl.—Well, the one with the stone on the corner.

Don Cecilio.—What number?

Girl.—The house with the light.

Don Cecilio.—But what number?

Girl.—At the edge of the ruins.

Don Cecilio.—See here, girl, the best thing is for us to go together. If not, I shall never cure the insult of your sister . . . Good-bye, Adolfo. I'll see you tomorrow at the club, shall I not?

Adolfo.—Yes, sir, yes. Until tomorrow.

Don Cecilio.—Come on . . .

Girl.—Good-bye.

Adolfo.—Good-bye. I trust your sister will be better.

Girl.—Thank you, sir. (*DON CECILIO goes out through the front grating and she follows him.*)

Adolfo.—He is a very pleasant man. But what a monomania about marriage! Ha! ha! ha! And what a fear he has of Concha Puerto! (*The latter comes in from the garden and sees ADOLFO with great surprise and stops to greet him with much pleasure.*)

Concha.—What? Good evening. I didn't notice. You here? How are you?

Adolfo (Somewhat disconcerted).—Well . . . and you, madam?

Concha.—I am well, thank you. But what are you doing here alone?

Adolfo.—Don Cecilio has just left.

Concha.—Does Don Julian know that you are here?

Adolfo.—Yes, madam.

Concha.—And does Santita know it?

Adolfo.—Yes, she does too.

Concha.—And the other persons who are at the door?

Adolfo.—They . . . I don't know . . . I haven't seen them . . . I did not come in by the front door.

Concha.—Ah! Don't you want me to introduce them?

Adolfo.—Thank you.

Concha.—Yes, thank you, or no, thank you?

Adolfo.—Simply thank you, madam.

Concha.—Well, speaking of something else. I suppose you will think that Bobadilla is an impolite fellow.

Adolfo.—Bobadilla?

Concha.—Yes, sir, my husband.

Adolfo.—Madam, God forbid.

Concha.—The fact is that he ought to have come to see you. But the poor fellow has scarcely been himself for days.

Adolfo.—Why, what is the matter?

Concha.—The same as always, the toothache.

Adolfo.—The toothache?

Concha.—Yes, it is true. I am talking to you as if you were one of the town. Well, when people are agreeable it seems to me as if I had known them all my life.

Adolfo.—You are very kind.

Concha.—Well, my husband has a tooth that has been bothering him for about three months. And you will say like everyone else, why doesn't he have it pulled? And that's just it. Just fancy! I have taken him to Huelva, I have taken him to Sevilla, I have taken him to Cadiz, and we have come back from them all just the same. Just as soon as he sees a dentist he gets into a panic, just listen! a cold sweat and a chill so it seems he would die. And we have to give it up. And so it has been for three months, as I said, groaning and groaning and yet not able to make up his mind to it. It isn't that he is a coward, no. He is a man of courage—he has been on the sea, he has fought, he has been in the war, he has married twice . . . But he goes to the dentist frightened to death and asking him on his knees not to touch him.

Adolfo.—A strange thing for a man of his character and temperament . . . (*GUITARRA* comes in through the front grating.)

Guitarra.—Madam.

Concha.—What? Have you been? How is your master?

Guitarra.—Running up and down the halls.

Concha.—Poor fellow.

Guitarra.—I have never seen him as he is tonight. He told me if you didn't come right away and change the bandage for him, he would blow his brains out.

Concha.—Poor fellow! What do you think? Let's go

at once, Guitarra. Now you know why he hasn't been to pay his respects to you.

Adolfo.—Madam, my only desire is for him to get better. Beg him not to worry a moment on my account.

Concha.—Thank you for your kindness.

Adolfo.—Not at all.

Concha.—I shall see you again.

Adolfo.—Good night, madam. (*Concha goes out through the front grating, where GUITARRA is waiting for her. Soon she turns again to ADOLFO.*)

Concha.—Listen, if you really wish me to introduce you to the young lady, it will take but a minute. A coincidence like this . . .

Adolfo.—To whom?

Concha.—This young lady in whom you seem interested, Juanita la Rosa.

Adolfo.—Why it is an invention of the people!

Concha.—See here, Adalid, in a small town nothing is kept secret. It is known even when a person buys a postage stamp. So we all know about everything.

Adolfo.—I assure you that there is absolutely nothing in it.

Concha.—Oh, pshaw!

Adolfo.—Just the same, to accept an introduction in this way might seem . . .

Concha.—Oh, come, you prefer that things should happen accidentally.

Adolfo.—I don't know how to tell you that you are building on air. You may think what you like.

Guitarra.—Mistress!

Concha.—What?

Guitarra.—Pardon me if I say it, but you are delaying and the master will not stand it long. He'll blow his eyes out!

Concha.—Poor fellow! We are going right now. You see? This suffering of Bobadilla is a real martyrdom for me. But I don't want to go without telling you one thing. Concha Puerto is your friend. A real friend, in all frankness. What you call an out and out friend.

Adolfo.—I am much pleased.

Concha.—Whenever you like, to carry things along discreetly, we will have a dance at the club, and we will arrange a festival . . .

Adolfo.—No!

Concha.—Why not? That is the custom of the town.

Adolfo.—By no means.

Concha.—What I have said, I have said. Think about it. Let's go, *Guitarra*.

Guitarra.—Let's go, mistress.

Concha.—Oh, one moment.

Guitarra (Aside).—All right, when we get there the master's eyes will be in the dining room lamp.

Concha (To ADOLFO, mysteriously).—The Piñas are going to offer their balcony to you.

Adolfo.—Madam!

Concha.—I know what I am talking about. Don't accept it. The Piñas' balcony has a light in front of it and to court with a light opposite . . . you can imagine whether it is very nice.

Adolfo.—But, madam!

Concha.—You can count on mine, for it is much more private, and so far it has never had an evil angel.

Adolfo.—Fine!

Concha.—It is right next to the garden. The fragrance of the magnolias and the jasmine pervades it . . . One can hear the murmur of the fountain . . . Right next to Paradise! Good-bye until tomorrow.

Adolfo.—Good-bye, madam, good-bye.

Concha.—Come on, *Guitarra*. (*To ADOLFO from the front door.*) More than friend, I am your ally. Don't forget. Until tomorrow. (*Goes. GUITARRA follows her.*)

Adolfo.—Oh, Lord, what a whirl! What impertinence! And what a power of imagination! Not bad that I put off an introduction that would have been embarrassing just now. (*CONCHA PUERTO returns rapidly, followed by JUANITA, ANGELA and PILAR. GUITARRA also.*)

Concha.—It is silly that a young fellow should be here alone with three girls as pretty as roses right at the door. (*Introducing them.*) Angela and Pilar, daughters of Santita and nieces of Don Julian . . .

Adolfo.—I have much pleasure . . .

Angela.—The pleasure is ours.

Pilar.—Be seated.

Concha.—Mademoiselle Juanita la Rosa. What have I said?

Adolfo.—Mademoiselle . . . (*JUANITA smiles, blushing.*)

Concha.—You all know who he is.

Guitarra (*Seeing the course of events.*) Come! Everyone to their own affairs! (*Starts to the kitchen.*)

Concha.—Where are you going, *Guitarra*?

Guitarra.—I was going to the kitchen.

Concha.—But haven't you any heart? Don't you know the master is raving like a mad dog?

Guitarra.—I, yes, mistress; but it seems that you don't know it.

Concha.—Be still, you saucy one! Listen, *Pilar*, your nether is in the kitchen and is calling you.

Pilar.—Me? Excuse me. (*Exit through the garden.*)

Adolfo.—Certainly.

Concha.—Come with me to the door, *Angela*.

Angela.—I? With your permission.

Adolfo.—It is granted, also..

Concha.—*Guitarra*, let's go.

Guitarra.—We are going now. (*CONCHA PUERTO goes out, whispering to ANGELA and followed by the servant.*)

Juanita (*Disturbed*).—This *Concha* . . .

DON JULIAN comes to the door at the left with the letter for ADOLFO. On seeing the interesting couple he retires prudently through the garden fearing to disturb. JUANITA and ADOLFO, slightly disconcerted, do not notice the priest and look at each other smiling. Both try to find a sentence to begin the conversation. At last JUANITA finds it and asks the lawyer with a plain and simple manner:

Juanita.—And when did you come to the town? On this afternoon's train? (*The curtain falls.*)

ACT II

The same scene as the first act. Ten days have passed. It is three in the afternoon. The windows on the garden are wide open. The light coming through them is partly obscured by a linen curtain, open in the middle. On one of the chairs is a fly-swatter.

(ANGELA is embroidering, seated in a low chair. SANTITA is sleeping profoundly in a rocker.)

Angela.—Angela Maria, what heat! And what awful mosquitos! This seems like a candy store.

(Mechanically she begins to sing quite low and finally sings out loud the fandanguillo of DIEGUILLA, which has taken root in the house.)

Angela.— Today it seems to me,
That I am surely mad,
And e'er do I seek thee,
When thou dost leave me sad.

(Behind the scene, in her own realm, DIEGUILLA, stimulated by the example, sings:)

Dieguilla.— No pink more bright,
Nor rose more fine,
Doth my heart delight,
Like thy face divine.

Angela (Scarcely begins the stanza).—Now she has started.
Pilar (PILAR, not to be left out, sings also, within at the left):

The house where I dwell,
Has walls that are white,
And clear is its well,
And its flowers so bright.

Angela.—I say, she's got a cold! The fandanguillo has become the fashion. How we take advantage of the opportunity when mama doesn't see! She is sleeping like a log.

(As if the three had put themselves in accord, each one begins again her stanza, this time all together. In the midst of the confusion DON JULIAN enters from the street, without a cloak, with his cassock and cap.)

Don Julian.—What disturbance is this in my house.

Angela.—Uncle! (Begins to laugh and does not finish her stanza.)

Don Julian (Noticing his sister asleep).—This explains it all.

Angela.—Have you been across the street?

Don Julian.—Yes, chatting a bit. I left because they all looked as if they wanted to take a nap. (Giving her the cap.) Here, bring me my house cap from my room.

Angela.—Right away.

Don Julian.—And Pilar?

Angela.—You have heard her; it seems she is a little hoarse.

Don Julian.—Has Cecilio been to see her?

Angela.—Yes.

Don Julian.—And what did he say?

Angela.—That it is nothing; just a summer cold.

Don Julian.—But that she shouldn't go out of her room?

Angela.—Yes, that she shouldn't go out.

Don Julian.—Go on, bring me the cap, so I'll not get cold too; for I am all in a sweat.

Angela.—Right away, uncle. (*Goes out at the left.*)

Santita (Waking up).—Hey! Back again? What time is it?

Don Julian.—It is just three by the church clock.

Santita.—Three already? We must go to our prayers. (*Rises.*) These flies do stick today. (*Takes the fly-swatte*r and frightens away the flies. *Hits DON JULIAN on the head.*)

Don Julian.—May God reward you, sister. (*ANGELA comes back with the cap.*)

Angela.—Here it is.

Don Julian.—May God reward you too, daughter.

*Santita (Putting down the fly-swatte*r).—To prayers, child, it is time. (*Goes out at the left, yawning.*)

Angela.—Today we are not more than half awake.

Don Julian.—Hush, you minx.

Angela.—Listen, uncle.

Don Julian.—Well?

Angela.—Is it true that the lawyer went to see you in the sacristy?

Don Julian.—Are you very much worried about it?

Angela.—He did go to see you, then? What did he want?

Don Julian.—If I tell you, you will know as much as I.

Angela.—Well, tell me.

Don Julian.—What you have to do is to go to prayers with your mother.

Angela.—First I am going to tell Pilar about the lawyer. (*Exit at the left.*)

Don Julian.—The lawyer has got them all stirred up . . . Ha! . . . Let's see what the Daily has to say this afternoon. (*Looks for it.*) Why where did they put it? Well, we'll have to turn greyhound! (*Shaking off the flies with his handkerchief.*) My how bad these flies are today! (*ADOLFO comes in through the front grating.*)

Adolfo.—Greetings to you, Don Julian.

Don Julian.—Welcome, Don Adolfo. I wasn't expecting you yet, but I am glad you have come early.

Adolfo.—Glad? Why?

Don Julian.—Sit down. Because now my sister and my nieces are beginning their daily prayers and we shall have time to talk a while about everything we wish without reserve.

Adolfo.—So much the better. I assure you that one of my torments in this old town . . . I beg your pardon.

Don Julian.—No, my son, no; I think the same as you that it is a miserable town, a miserable little town.

Adolfo.—Well, I was saying that one of my greatest torments here consists in that I cannot take a step but it is commented on in a thousand ways, and that, without my knowing how nor whence, it is known everywhere even what I do in my own room with the door closed. Why, Don Julian, I just live in a show-case!

Don Julian.—You are right, my son. These women get the scent and find out everything. And among them all there is none like Concha Puerto.

Adolfo.—Oh, Concha Puerto is my despair! She completely upsets me. And some days my nerves get in such a state . . .

Don Julian.—Yes, I noticed this morning that you were very much excited.

Adolfo.—I have my reasons.

Don Julian.—Well, let's hear them.

Adolfo.—Don Julian, it is ten days since I met Juanita la Rosa here . . .

Don Julian.—Oh, really! It is about Juanita la Rosa!

Adolfo.—Of course! Why, do you think they talk about anyone else in the town since I came?

Don Julian.—And what new has happened to you?

Adolfo.—Simply that they have created for me an unbearable situation, violent, so that I have resolved to make an end of it. (*Rises nervously.*)

Don Julian.—Yes?

Adolfo.—Yes, sir.

Don Julian.—Be calm, my son, be calm.

Adolfo.—Since I am living in the town I have to mix up with the people, don't I? Not to do so would be absurd. Besides the circumstances of the affairs that brought me

here demand it also. I am a person of some education; I need then to meet people, to see people, to visit certain houses. Well, I don't go to a single one where they have not previously invited this young lady, for one pretext or another. I arrive, I greet her, perhaps, and for that reason, with a studied coldness . . . Well, just the same, right away looks of significance between those present. And without my seeing who, some one puts a chair beside her in which no one ever sits except myself. As if the chair were infected for the others! And, of course, sitting down beside her, it would be rude if I did not talk, and as soon as I say a few words to her, the others begin a conversation aside, paying no attention to us and leaving us like two lovers. Do you think that I can stand this?

Don Julian.—Ha! ha! ha! Really, my son, it doesn't seem to me such a serious thing. I believe you are exaggerating.

Adolfo.—That I am exaggerating, Don Julian? You have no idea of the looks, of the smiles, of the slaps on the shoulder that I have to stand! If I do not talk to her: "How he pretends!" If I do: "Of course, how absurd it is for him to pretend!" If I pass along the street: "My friend, you are completely lost." If I do not: "He knows that she is not at home." If I talk to another girl: "How you are going to be scolded!" And so it goes on and on, whether you do or whether you don't, you are bound straight for the wedding . . . It makes me dizzy! And so it is all day and all night until I go to sleep! You can imagine that there is no patience that would endure it!

Don Julian.—Nor is there any remedy, my son, except for you to leave the town . . . Here there are four or five women for every man . . . So you have to lock your doors! But all this amounts to nothing; it is nothing to get excited about.

Adolfo.—It is that something still more serious has happened.

Don Julian.—Let's see, let's see . . .

Adolfo.—I don't know whether from the Club, or from the tobacco shop, or from the candle shop, or from what place in particular, there has come something about this young lady and attributed to me, that is highly offensive to her.

Don Julian.—Caramba! These are strong words. That is a mean thing. What are they trying to make out?

Adolfo.—I shouldn't like you to hear it, and to repeat it would be contemptible.

Don Julian.—Less bad than that she should find it out.

Adolfo.—Yes, sir; but she has heard about it and believes, apparently, that I am to blame for it.

Don Julian.—Is it possible?

Adolfo.—I found it out the other night at the recorder's house. Scarcely had I come in, when Juanita and her aunt who were of the company, got up as if they had been shot and left without even looking at me. The next day the scene was repeated at Concha Puerto's. Yesterday at mass they avoided my greeting, too. As you can understand, whether I am interested in the girl or not, I cannot tolerate that they should attribute to me a story in every way unworthy of a gentleman. I took my pen and I wrote a few lines, vindicating myself, telling her that I am above all a man of honor, incapable of offending a young lady in any way. Well, that letter never reached her.

Don Julian.—But how do you know?

Adolfo.—By an anonymous one that I received.

Don Julian.—And are you going to pay attention to an anonymous letter?

Adolfo.—Yes, sir, for as soon as I found out she was not going to reply to me nor change her attitude, I had to put faith in the anonymous letter. That letter makes it plain that mine was intercepted by her aunt, who, by your leave, is a ridiculous person.

Don Julian.—I agree with you, she is ridiculous.

Adolfo.—So, my dear Don Julian, I venture to beg you that for my good name you will trouble yourself a bit.

Don Julian.—Tell me what you wish and don't talk any more about troubling me.

Adolfo.—All I want is for you to go to that house and vindicate me. Make for me the explanations that I cannot make.

Don Julian.—I will do what you wish today.

Adolfo.—And I will thank you with all my heart. Now that it is no longer possible for me to talk to this girl for five minutes . . .

Don Julian.—Would you prefer to do so?

Adolfo.—If there were any way to bring it about, with no other witnesses but you, of course.

Don Julian.—Well, well, my son, well; that's very well.
(*Rises and goes to the door at the left and to that of the garden.*)

Adolfo.—What are you doing, Father?

Don Julian.—It may be that Dieguilla has put herself behind the door to listen. (*Lowering his voice.*) I am going to tell you to state things plainly.

Adolfo.—Why?

Don Julian.—Because we are not going to attract anyone's attention and you shall have your wish—talk with Juanita with no other witnesses than this priest.

Adolfo.—Really, Don Julian?

Don Julian.—Listen. Pilar, my niece, has been sick two or three days and doesn't go out of her room.

Adolfo.—I didn't know a word about it.

Don Julian.—It is nothing in particular—just a cold. Well, as she and Juanita are great friends, Juanita came alone yesterday and the day before to keep her company. So if she comes today as the other days, and you are here, you can see how the interview you wish will be right at hand.

Adolfo.—Yes, sir, that's so. And do you think she will come?

Don Julian.—I think so. And if she happens to come at this time as she did yesterday, it will suit to a T. Santita and the girls are at their prayers; probably they will wind up the prayers with a nap . . . In this hot season nearly everybody lies down a while . . . There is no danger of anyone coming. . . . Just see if the coincidence is not fortunate!

Adolfo.—Yes, indeed, Don Julian. God grant that it may all come out as you have said!

Don Julian.—It will. Don't you move from here. I am going to change my cassock for my alpaca suit, for it is cooler, and I'll be back right away. So long, eh?

Anolfo.—So long, Don Julian, and may God reward you.

Don Julian.—My boy, do you know one thing?

Adolfo.—What's that, Don Julian?

Don Julian.—That I think you are quite interested . . . quite interested.

Adolfo.—No . . . no . . . sir . . .

Don Julian.—Perhaps I am crazy, as usual. Quite

interested, quite interested. (*Goes out at the left. Pause.* ADOLFO is uneasy, although he wishes to hide it even from himself. He looks out through the front grating, then out into the garden, then absently at some photographs.)

Adolfo (Looking at his watch).—A quarter past three, and at four the recorder expects me . . . (Looking at one of the pictures.) Is that she? . . . Yes, it is meant for her. Doesn't look like her at all! (Goes on examining the picture. At this point, and far from suspecting that she will find here the lawyer of her thoughts, JUANITA comes in from the street, dressed in white, with a parasol and a fan.)

Juanita (Stopping, much surprised. Aside).—(Ay! Adolfo!) (Takes a few steps to see what he is doing.) (Looking at my picture!) (Wants to laugh, but suppresses it, and taps her face with her fan.)

Adolfo (Turning quickly towards her).—Eh! Who is it? Juanita! Delighted! How do you do?

Juanita.—I am well . . . And you?

Adolfo.—I was waiting for you.

Juanita.—Yes? Then you knew that I was going to come?

Adolfo.—Sometimes I have happened to know something that the rest didn't.

Juanita.—And you were amusing yourself looking at that scarecrow? It was supposed to look like me, but it doesn't, does it?

Adolfo (Looking at it).—No, it doesn't.

Juanita (After letting him look well at her).—All right, then . . . with your permission . . . I am in a hurry . . . It startled me to find you here . . . It was the last thing I expected . . . Well, I must hurry . . . By your leave, I will go to see how Pilar is.

Adolfo.—A moment.

Juanita.—What?

Adolfo.—Allow me a moment, for I want to talk to you a moment.

Juanita.—Are you in a great hurry?

Adolfo.—Great.

Juanita.—In that case I will call Santita or Don Julian . . . for this way. . . . alone . . . I assure you that I must hurry . . . If anyone should come in from the street . . .

Adolfo.—No one will come now. It is the hour for the siesta. Besides, you are talking with a gentleman, notwithstanding the lies that have been told about me here. I beg that you will listen to me a moment . . . (*At a glance of JUANITA towards the door.*) No, no one is coming, no. Listen, not to detain you long.

Juanita.—I am listening. I am listening. I can't refuse your request. After all you are a stranger and should be treated with some consideration.

Adolfo.—Have a seat.

Juanita.—That would be going too far.

Adolfo.—Why? Sit down, Juanita.

Juanita.—Well, I will . . . I will venture to do so . . . When I tell you that I was so startled . . . (*Sits down. At once ADOLFO sits down beside her.*)

Adolfo.—Juanita, this kindness with which you receive me, which is such a contrast to the way you have avoided me lately, makes me eternally calm. I, Juanita . . .

(*How things do go in the world! The phrase that ADOLFO is about to begin with such sincerity and nobleness, is interrupted by the arrival of CONCHA PUERTO, who appears suddenly at the front grating. She is carrying several packages of groceries and sweetmeats.*)

Concha (Enchanted at seeing the couple).—Ah! ha! ha!

Adolfo (As if waking from a dream).—Eh?

Juanita (Disturbed).—Concha Puerto . . .

Concha.—Ah! ha! ha!

Adolfo.—What does that “Ah! ha! ha!” mean, madam?

Concha.—You have never heard it? First of all, good afternoon. Then “Ah! ha! ha!” means that I am very glad, that I was expecting this, that it is very good . . . Come, come, Ah! ha! ha! And now go on talking, for I don't want to disturb you.

Adolfo.—No, no, madam; a little calmness. I must explain to you . . .

Juanita.—Ah, yes, don't imagine anything.

Concha.—I don't imagine anything, and I don't need explanations. I repeat that I shall not disturb you. I have come to make for Pilar the wine biscuit that they say will cure colds. It doesn't cure them, but they say so. I am going to the kitchen a moment. I shall not disturb you. Good-bye. I shall not disturb you. (*Starts to go to the garden, much satisfied.*)

Adolfo.—Madam . . .

Concha (Returning).—Don't say a word. Some things do not need comment. I shall not disturb you, I shall not disturb you . . . (*Goes through the garden to the left.*)

Adolfo.—Well, well! We are cool!

Juanita (Fanning herself).—So, so.

Adolfo.—I can't stand the officiousness of that lady! How inopportune! Why didn't she make the biscuit for colds in her own kitchen? What possessed her to come here now, in this heat, and with us to see her, so she could go away and imagine things and tell things she doesn't need to?

Juanita.—Didn't I tell you that I was in a hurry? . . . It was very imprudent. I must go; I must go on in.

Adolfo.—And what for? What by chance was to happen, has happened . . . I beg you not to go without answering for me this question: "Did you receive a letter of mine?"

Juanita.—This morning very early, yes, sir. Did you think it strange? My aunt just gave it to me; she had kept it until then.

Adolfo.—And did you believe what I said in it?

Juanita.—You didn't need to have said it. Apparently you deserve a much better opinion from me than I do from you.

Adolfo.—Thank you . . . As I have noticed in you a seriousness, an evasive manner . . .

Juanita.—They make a person do many things . . . My aunt is so cranky, so particular . . .

Adolfo.—Then you didn't believe for a moment . . . ?

Juanita.—Not for a moment, Adolfo.

Adolfo.—That's what I thought, and what I hoped, but you will understand that I had to know it from you yourself.

(*PILAR'S cold, as it seems, causes strange commotion in the house, at unusual hours. At this point DON CECILIO enters, also through the front grating, and he cannot restrain an exclamation on seeing the unexpected scene.*)

Don Cecilio.—Caramba!

Adolfo (Standing up with a start).—Who is it?

Don Cecilio.—I. A man of peace. No need to be alarmed, my friend.

Adolfo.—How are you, doctor?

Don Cecilio.—Not as well as you, but still alive. And you, my pretty one? Go on, go on with your cooing.

Juanita.—We are not cooing, doctor; we are not turtle doves.

Don Cecilio.—No? Well, go on, my girl. (*To ADOLFO.*) What did I tell you?

Adolfo.—How is that?

Don Cecilio.—What did I tell you? Don't you remember what I told you?

Adolfo.—You have told me so many things, my friend.

Don Cecilio.—You know to what I refer. What did I tell you?

Adolfo.—Really, I don't remember now.

Don Cecilio.—Don't remember now, eh? Well, I do! And I shall not interrupt you any more, I am going to see the sick. Caramba! History repeats itself! (*Exit by the door at the left.*)

Juanita.—This good man, since they have said he is always jesting, always tries to jest. But he wasn't now.

Adolfo.—No, he wasn't.

Juanita.—Well, Adolfo, I am doing what I ought not to do. Now you know what you wanted to, don't you?

Adolfo.—Yes, I know . . .

Juanita.—In that case . . .

Adolfo.—Yes, I must not detain you longer. Shall I see you after a while?

Juanita.—I don't know whether we shall see each other after a while.

Adolfo.—Well, until tomorrow.

Juanita.—I don't know either whether we shall see each other tomorrow.

Adolfo.—Then . . .

Juanita.—Yes, until we see each other again.

Adolfo.—Until then.

Juanita.—Accidentally . . .

Adolfo.—Accidentally?

Juanita.—As now . . . for we have seen each other accidentally . . .

Adolfo.—Be that as it may, I hope it may be soon.

(They look at each other, delaying the moment of separation. The SACRISTAN OF SAN ANTONIO, a type prim and meek, comes opportunely to the front grating. He carries an affair with a picture of the saint, and the inside of which forms a charity box.)

Sacristan.—For the worship of San Antonio!

Adolfo.—Eh?

Juanita.—What?

Sacristan.—For the worship of San Antonio!

Juanita.—The Sacristan of San Antonio! What do you think of it?

Adolfo (*Looking for coin in his trousers' pocket*).—Here, Brother. Well, I don't seem to have any change. Never mind. (*Takes from his purse a two peseta piece and drops it into the box. The SACRISTAN opens his eyes as large as the two pesetas.*) Here.

Sacristan (*Very suavely*).—May the Blessed San Antonio reward you! And may he grant you all your needs! And to the young lady, too . . . I shall not say more! Much happiness!

Juanita.—Fine! Now they will know this in every house in the town. You can't imagine what two pesetas mean in the charity-box of San Antonio!

Adolfo (*To DON JULIAN, who enters*).—Don Julian! (*DON JULIAN comes back with sack coat and cap*.)

Don Julian.—Hello! And here we have madam?

Juanita.—Don Julian!

Don Julian.—Did you just arrive? When did she come?

Adolfo.—A few minutes after you left.

Don Julian.—Ah, so! And I see by your faces that you have already talked about what you wished, Adolfo?

Adolfo.—Yes, sir.

Don Julian.—Don't you see, my boy? And nobody knew of it, and there is no one who has seen you, and there is no need to bribe the town crier.

Adolfo.—No, nobody has seen us, that is the truth.

Juanita.—Nobody! (*Both laugh*.)

Don Julian.—What are you laughing about? Did anyone come perchance?

Juanita.—Concha Puerto!

Don Julian.—Ave Maria Purisima!

Juanita.—To make a biscuit for Pilar.

Don Julian.—That's so, she said so last night! How did I come to forget about it?

Adolfo.—And Don Cecilio . . .

Don Julian.—Cecilio, too. Of course, to see . . . Heavens, man, heavens!

Juanita.—And last of all the Sacristan of San Antonio.

Don Julian.—By the Blessed Santa Barbara! Why, this is worse than a newspaper extra! How clumsy I was! Perhaps this was all written above; perhaps it was all written.

Adolfo.—Perhaps so.

Don Julian (Looking towards the front door).—Well, let these no-accounts go! Now we have the most difficult one of all.

Juanita.—Who?

Don Julian.—Your aunt, with her face like a stick.

Juanita.—My aunt? (*To ADOLFO.*) Fine thing you have done!

Adolfo.—I?

Juanita.—You, you. (*In effect, DOÑA BELEN enters. The kindly smile of her face has disappeared.*)

Doña Belen.—Good afternoon.

Don Julian.—Good afternoon, my daughter.

Adolfo.—Madam . . . (*DOÑA BELEN lowers her head.*)

Don Julian.—What? You came to see Pilar, didn't you?

Doña Belen.—Yes, but first I want to talk with you. (*At a movement of DON JULIAN.*) Privately.

Don Julian.—Oh, all right. We can go into the parlor.

Adolfo.—I am going.

Don Julian.—It is not necessary, my son.

Adolfo.—I have an urgent appointment. They are expecting me.

Don Julian.—Well, that is different.

Juanita.—And here we three were chatting . . .

Doña Belen.—Yes, the Sacristan of San Antonio has just told me. (*The temperature goes down five degrees.*)

Juanita.—The Sacristan came in at a moment . . .

Doña Belen.—Be still, child. And you, sir, listen to a few words before you go.

Adolfo.—With the greatest of pleasure. Go on.

Doña Belen.—When a gentleman . . .

Juanita.—Aunt . . .

Doña Belen.—When a gentleman . . .

Don Julian.—Belen . . .

Doña Belen.—When a gentleman wishes to speak with a young lady—whether he is interested in a certain way or not; for we need not pay attention to the lies of the people—

the first thing this gentleman ought to do is to take into consideration the person or persons who represent to the young lady the paternal or maternal authority.

Adolfo.—Very well. Will you be so kind as to listen to a few words from me?

Doña Belen.—Certainly.

Adolfo.—When a gentleman wishes to vindicate himself with a young lady because the person or persons who represent the paternal or maternal authority, exceptionally, without doubt, have paid attention to the lies of the people in a manner which offends that gentleman, that gentleman hastens to take counsel with his kindest and most prudent friends. And when he has the good fortune to find himself in a house to which the young lady comes, with whom he wishes to speak, he talks to her without harm to anyone, and without failing in the most scrupulous courtesy, especially when it is a house as worthy and respectable as this one. My best wishes, Don Julian. Good-bye, Juanita . . . (*Exit through the garden.* *DOÑA BELEN sucks in air as if she had just finished speaking.*)

Juanita.—Now you see, aunt, to what you have exposed yourself?

Doña Belen.—What do you mean, girl? To what have I exposed myself? Out of consideration for the Father I have not replied to him as he deserved. These pettifoggers have very long tongues, but they do not get the better of me. Go in and see Pilar, since what you came for was to see her, wasn't it?

Juanita.—Yes, madam, I came to see her. (*Exit at the left, looking at the priest out of the corner of her eye, as if commanding herself to him.*)

Doña Belen (*Returning to her habitual smile, as soon as JUANITA is gone.*).—Tell us, Father, what has happened here?

Don Julian.—My daughter, you seem rather foolish sometimes. What do you suppose has taken place? Adolfo came to see me, and while I was changing my clothes your niece came and they got into a conversation. Adolfo is in every way a gentleman . . .

Doña Belen.—Of course, I know that, Father. And we must talk about him, for I suspect that the plot is thickening.

Don Julian.—It is . . . it is . . .

(*CONCHA PUERTO comes out quickly from behind the curtain.*)

tains in the back. She wears a white apron, with a bib. Has the sleeves of her waist rolled up.)

Concha.—What is this? Was there some quarrel? For Adolfo went out through the garden like a rocket. Hello, Doña Belen!

(Following CONCHA enter ANGELA and SANTITA in a similar attitude.)

Angela.—What was it? What was it? Good afternoon.

Santita.—What has happened? God be with you, Belen. What has happened?

Doña Belen.—Nothing, nothing has happened . . . Good afternoon all of you. Isn't it true, Father, that nothing has happened?

Don Julian.—Nothing, absolutely. All there is to it is that this lady of middle age has treated her niece with much severity, with considerable severity, in my opinion.

Santita.—Eh? What did you say?

Concha.—That Doña Belen, in the Father's opinion, has treated Juanita with too great severity!

Santita.—Ah, indeed! Well, do you know what I think? That she has treated her with such severity in order that she and the lawyer may fall more in love with each other.
(Laughter.)

Doña Belen (Crossing herself).—Ay! Ay! Ay! . . .

Santita.—I say that to all of you and I say it to her right now, in order that she may save herself any tears! That's all! (Exit quickly at left.)

Doña Belen.—What a Santita she is! What things to imagine! Father, come with me to see the sick one, and we can talk of our affair later . . .

Don Julian.—Yes, daughter, let's go.

Doña Belen.—What a Santita! What a Santita she is!

Don Julian.—Remarkable, remarkable . . . There is nobody like her to say clever things . . . (Exit at left with DOÑA BELEN. Both laugh over the affair.)

Concha.—Your mother certainly was mighty clever.

Angela.—Mighty clever! I am going to tell it to Pilar.
(Starts to go and comes back.)

Concha.—This fastidious Doña Belen has more underneath than she lets on; she throws the stone and hides her hand. And he, he goes out on the street as if he were struck.

(PEPE LORA appears at the front grating, surprising them both.
He is more stern than usual.)

Angela.—Concha!

Concha.—What?

Angela.—Look! Pepe Lora!

Concha (Receiving him with amiable surprise).—Pepe Lora! You here?

Pepe Lora.—Yes, I am here. Don't you see me? God be with you, Angela.

Angela.—God be with you. What is there now?

Pepe.—One day more than yesterday.

Concha.—One day more than yesterday. Now you know. The reply is very philosophical, but Angela asks what brought you here.

Pepe.—My feet brought me here.

Angela.—You are getting very profound.

Pepe.—And haven't you the Daily here?

Concha.—You're going to try the scheme of the Daily again? Take your eyes off the ground and tell us what's biting you and what wind blew you here.

Pepe.—Nothing's biting me, but the Sacristan of San Antonio whispered to me that Juanita and that stranger were here courting and I wanted to see it with my own eyes.

Angela.—Well, you see that they are not here.

Pepe.—Well, I'll go and break the Sacristan's head. That's all.

Concha.—No, let his head alone. They are not here, but they were.

Pepe.—They were here?

Concha.—And much entertained, and much pleased . . . and without bothering about you, I am sure.

Pepe.—So, eh? I know what sort of a way this dude has, and that he uses a lot of poetry when he talks.

Angela.—A lot of poetry?

Pepe.—Yes, a lot of poetry. And she's crazy about the same thing. I'll finish the poetry for both of them.

Concha.—What are you saying?

Pepe.—That I'll break the lawyer's head. That's all.

Angela.—Oh, Lord! Then there'll be two broken heads.

Pepe.—You know what I'll do.

Concha.—What you'd like to do.

Pepe.—No, madam, what I will do. For I was Juanita's

lover, and Juanita jilted me roughly, and Juanita is not going to make a joke of me, and Juanita shall pay for all this.

Angela.—But, Pepe, Juanita didn't try to create in you any illusions . . .

Pepe.—Enough of illusions—that's all poetry, poetry.

Angela.—If you never were her ideal . . .

Pepe.—Poetry, poetry.

Angela.—If there is another girl in Escobas Street that is sighing for you . . .

Pepe.—Poetry, all that is poetry.

Concha.—Let him be, Angela, you'll tire yourself out trying to convince him. For him, everything except breaking the head of the lawyer is all poetry.

Angela.—That's so.

Pepe.—If you had received the anonymous letter that I did this morning.

Angela.—An anonymous letter?

Concha.—Somebody sent you an anonymous letter?

Pepe.—An anonymous letter that would burn in a lamp. Warming up my head. As for me, I was inclined to wink at it all . . .

Concha.—And the anonymous letter stirred you up?

Pepe.—Yes, madam. I only want to know who wrote it to break their head.

Concha.—Ave Maria! Pretty soon the whole town will have broken heads.

Angela.—But what did the anonymous letter say?

Pepe.—What did it say? You'll see.

Concha.—Ah, you have it here?

Pepe.—Here it is. ((Draws from his pocket a letter and reads with difficulty.) “Good day, Pepe Lora.” Even went so far as to tell me good day.

Angela.—Why man, since they sent it to you in the morning . . .

Pepe (Reading).—“Were you not the one who would never consent that Juanita la Rosa should have another lover? Well, she has one.”

Angela.—People are as God made them.

Pepe.—You'll see. You'll see. (Continues reading.) “Apparently the proverb: ‘A barking dog never bites’ just fits you.” Ha! “I should never have believed it. Take care, Pepe Lora, or you will make people laugh more than

you have already, if you continue so . . . so ir . . .
so ir . . . "

Concha.—Irresolute.

Pepe.—Eh?

Concha (*Pointing to the word on the paper to make it appear that she has read it.*)—Irresolute, irresolute, it says. (*Between ANGELA and CONCHA there passes a look full of significance.*)

Pepe.—And what is irresolute?

Concha.—Irresolute means in the present case the same as childish.

Pepe.—Childish, I? The person who wrote that letter had better hide himself.

Concha.—And who wouldn't hide from you in your state of mind?

Angela (*With intent and alluding to CONCHA.*)—Well, in my opinion, whatever happens, Pepe Lora, the fact is that the one who wrote that did so with the clever idea of inciting you against the lawyer, so that the lawyer would fall more and more in love with Juanita la Rosa.

Concha.—That wouldn't be at all strange.

Pepe.—All this is still poetry. After this anonymous letter, the first time I meet the lawyer, I'll give him two slaps that will take all the poetry out of him and all of his kind. You'll see if the proverb about the barking dog that doesn't bite will fit me! You'll see. (*ADOLFO arrives opportunely from the direction in which he left.*)

Adolfo.—Good afternoon.

Pepe.—Good afternoon.

Angela.—Hey!

Concha.—Here again, Adolfo?

{ *Adolfo.*—Yes . . . I left a situation so strained that I scarcely was able . . . (*Noticing the uneasiness of all.*) What's the matter?

Pepe.—The train is going down the track.

Adolfo.—I don't understand.

Pepe.—And something down your throat, too.

Adolfo.—And who are you?

Pepe.—Perhaps you may have heard my name. I am Pepe Lora.

Adolfo.—Oh, yes. Now I understand your attitude. You are Pepe Lora?

Concha.—Yes, it is Pepe Lora.

Angela.—Pepe Lora.

Adolfo.—Well, I am Adolfo Adalid.

Pepe.—And I want to talk with you.

Adolfo.—We seem to be talking now.

Pepe.—There are too many people here.

Adolfo.—Not any too many but you, at any rate.

Concha.—Adolfo, for Heaven's sake . . .

Pepe.—We don't know which one is too many here, but I want to talk with you somewhere alone.

Adolfo.—Well, choose your place.

Pepe.—It must be in a place alone.

Adolfo.—Choose it.

Pepe.—The reading room of the Club. No one comes in there.

Adolfo.—Very good.

Pepe.—And then we can go where we like.

Adolfo.—Agreed.

Pepe.—Well, I am going there.

Adolfo.—And I shall follow after you.

Pepe.—Good afternoon.

Concha.—Good afternoon.

Pepe.—So you may come after me with your poetry!
(Exit.)

Angela.—Oh, I am going to tell it to Pilar. *(Exit hurriedly to the left.)*

Adolfo.—What does this jack-a-napes want with me? Do you know?

Concha.—Yes, sir, that you should not make love to Juanita.

Adolfo.—The cow's in the corn again. Most ridiculous and outlandish pretension on his part! He must be a dolt! Please tell me why this fool runs loose on the street?

Concha.—You are in a rage, Adolfo.

Adolfo.—Yes, I am. Is he a relative of yours?

Concha.—Heaven help me!

Adolfo.—For it seems that in these towns everyone is related! I beg your pardon! *(DON CECILIO enters at the left, ready to leave.)*

Don Cecilio.—Hello! Hello! You still here?

Adolfo.—No, sir.

Don Cecilio.—Oh, you are not here still?

Adolfo.—I mean that I left and came back.

Don Cecilio.—Worse yet.

Adolfo.—Why worse?

Don Cecilio.—I know what I mean, man.

Adolfo.—I suppose you do.

[*Don Cecilio.*—Angry. That's bad!

Adolfo.—I don't know what there is so strange in my coming to see Don Julian that you should take it in such a manner.

Don Cecilio.—You came to see Don Julian?

Adolfo.—Yes, Don Julian.

Don Cecilio.—He is pretending. Now there's no help for it. You are a fly caught in the spider's web. No way out. Next thing you will be going into the bull ring. You will do whatever the women of the town wish . . .

Concha.—Better that than doing what the men wish .

Adolfo.—You have insisted that I would be the plaything of circumstances just because you were, and I in this town and everywhere else am going to preserve my own free will as firm as anyone!

Don Cecilio.—As firm as anyone. Don't be uneasy, Concha, for I am going. I am going, Friend Adolfo. I am going to see a man who is sick. We are going to have a consultation. Well, it may be that we can save this sick man after all. But you, not even charity itself can save you! In your hands I leave him, Concha. Good afternoon.

Concha.—Good afternoon.

Adolfo.—Good-bye.

Don Cecilio.—Oh, you will be a bullfighter! (*Exit laughing.*)

Concha (*To ADOLFO, stifling her indignation towards the doctor.*)—All that is the matter with this gentleman is that his house is a hubbub. Do you understand? The neighbors say that he makes the beds and does the ironing. His wife is as ugly as the dickens. And the daughters wear so much false hair they don't know where to put their heads. Do you know what we call them? "A bargain sale of switches." For in the Town we are very fond of giving nicknames. And if I were to tell you . . .

Adolfo.—Don't tell me, for Heaven's sake, any more of the Town's jokes. What I want to know first of all . . .

Concha (*Looking towards the door at the left.*)—What you

want to know you will know right away. Excuse me, for my syrup is on the stove. I'll be back, I'll be back. (*Exit through the garden.*)

Adolfo.—Eh? (*At the same time JUANITA enters from the left.*)

Juanita.—Concha!

Adolfo.—Juanita!

Juanita.—Adolfo! How is it that you are here? Angela told me that Concha Puerto was calling me . . .

Adolfo.—I am pleased for the chance or the deception.

Juanita.—You have no cause to be pleased at anything, for you are going right away, unless you want to give my aunt a chance to come out and scold me again.

Adolfo.—I am going right away. Do not worry.

Juanita.—Then go on. There is the door. Don't let us repeat the other scene, for one word calls forth another and we shall talk longer than we ought to.

Adolfo.—Did it trouble you much?

Juanita.—And it hasn't ceased to, for my aunt is more peeved than ever.

Adolfo.—But are you sorry you told me what you did, Juanita?

Juanita.—If you don't go right away, I shall have to repent of all of it.

Adolfo.—Why, no you mustn't. No, for I shall obey you.

Juanita (*Noticing that ADOLFO does not stir*).—I don't see you obeying me very fast.

Adolfo.—The truth is—now that we see each other again . . . Before, I went away with a great curiosity—and now I don't want to go away with it again.

Juanita.—A curiosity?

Adolfo.—A very great one.

Juanita.—Does it concern me?

Adolfo.—Of course!

Juanita.—All right, providing you get rid of it quickly . . . What is it that you want to know?

Adolfo.—Is it true that you write verses?

Juanita.—See what he is getting at! And it was for this you stopped?

Adolfo.—Is it true?

Juanita.—And what does it matter to you, curious one?

Adolfo.—I have been much pleased at the idea.

Juanita.—Yes?

Adolfo.—It seems quite original in a girl.

Juanita.—Well, the fact is I know a lot of verses, and sometimes when I am gay, or when I am sad, or on other occasions, I take a notion to write some myself, but without intending to say them to anyone. I suppose I am imitating without paying attention to the ones I know.

Adolfo.—Say one for me.

Juanita.—No, indeed.

Adolfo.—Why not?

Juanita.—Because they are just a girl's trifles.

Adolfo.—They are not trifles.

Juanita.—Yes, they are. You would say so. Besides I don't remember any.

Adolfo.—Think them up.

Juanita.—Heavens, you will end by mortifying me.

I love and I don't love to tell,
And yet without telling, I tell;
I love, but I don't want to love,
Yet I love without wanting to love.

Adolfo (*With a certain alarm, the motive of which does not bother him very much*).—A fine verse!

Juanita.—Do you like it?

Adolfo.—Very much.

Juanita.—Well, that is a popular one. It is not mine.

Adolfo.—No? But I want one of yours!

Juanita.—I said the first one to get up courage. Let's see if I can remember one of mine that is not too ugly.

Adolfo.—Let's hear it.

Juanita.— Oh, pass no more by my door,
For people are fond of talk;
Though by yours I never do walk,
I'm with you there at each hour.

Adolfo (*Feeling the flattery*).—Very pretty, too! I like that better than the popular one.

Juanita.—Thank you very much. I knew that already.

Adolfo.—You knew what?

Juanita.—That you were going to say so, is what I knew, for you are very gallant.

Adolfo.—And . . .

Juanita.—That's all. (*Starting to leave.*) Until next year.

Adolfo.—Let's hear a second one.

Juanita.—You have already had the second.

Adolfo.—Do you remember when you wrote that verse?

Juanita.—When I wrote it? . . . You are a good one at asking things that are hard to answer. Anybody can see that you are a lawyer.

Adolfo.—How?

Juanita.—Because you beat all around the bush to get where you want to.

Adolfo.—Are you going to answer me?

Juanita.—That, no. I beg you for the last time . . .

Adolfo.—Yes, I am going. I beg your pardon. The truth is that I am enjoying immensely the pleasure of talking to you without witnesses, of looking at you as much as I like. Does this tone that I use and the words I speak surprise you? Well, for you I have no other. It is true, yes, it is true that which they all say, and which they all wish, although it is not true just because they wish it. I don't know when or where it began, but you inspire in me that feeling which is not satisfied except at the side of the person that inspires it . . .

Juanita.—Heavens, Adolfo . . .

Adolfo.—These words, these sentiments, do they find an echo in your heart, perhaps? This verse that you have just said to me and the date of which I asked you, did you compose it after you knew me?

Juanita.—Adolfo, I can't talk . . . I don't want to talk . . .

Adolfo.—Well, it is necessary for us to talk a good deal, a good deal! But where curious eyes will not be watching us, nor twenty curious ears listening to us, but in a place alone . . . quiet . . . Where can we talk in this way, you and I?

(CONCHA PUERTO, who has come back a few moments before, thinking she would be needed, exclaims spontaneously:)

Concha.—Sir, in my balcony, that I have been offering to you ever since you came to the Town.

Adolfo (*A little disconcerted at seeing and hearing her.*).—What? In your balcony?

Concha.—Certainly. Don't you remember my offer, my good fellow?

Adolfo.—Yes, I remember . . . The moon . . . the fountain, the jasmine . . . Now, I don't know whether Juanita . . .

Juanita.—Juanita has no opinion. You'll have to decide. This talking from the balcony is the custom of the Town. And as for you, it will not compromise you at all to go. I will speak to my aunt . . .

Adolfo.—When?

Concha.—Just walk past my house tonight about ten and don't bother any more about it.

Adolfo.—What do you say, Juanita?

Juanita.—What can I say? Are you going to slight Concha Puerto who is such a good friend?

Adolfo.—Thank you . . . Until tonight.

Juanita.—Until tonight.

Concha.—Have you any fault to find with me?

Adolfo (Taking her hand).—After this, never. Good-bye.

Concha.—Good-bye.

Juanita.—Good-bye. (*Exit ADOLFO, disposed to invite PEPE to whatever he wishes.*)

Concha.—I did have a desire to ask this young gentleman: “Do you really love Juanita la Rosa, or is it just a circumstance of the Women's Town.” A person has to be so careful not to be indiscreet! (*Enter ANGELA.*)

Angela.—How it did tickle Pilar! Has the lawyer gone?

Concha.—He has gone, yes; but just look how she is blushing.

Angela.—Why, what's the matter?

Juanita.—Nothing . . . But tonight, if my aunt permits . . .

Angela.—She will permit!

Juanita.—I am going to Concha Puerto's balcony to talk with him.

Angela.—May you be very happy, my darling girl! I am so glad, so glad. And now I am going to tell Pilar, who will be happy, too. For we are never envious like lots of girls in the Town. And anyway, what's for one person is not for another.

Juanita.—Of course not. I am so glad you are pleased. (*Abstracted, walking about as if entranced.*)

Angela (Low to CONCHA PUERTO).—Listen, Concha. The anonymous letter to Pepe, did you send it?

Concha.—My very self. The lawyer was on his guard }
and needed a few firecrackers. And it will all end by their }
taking a few glasses together.

Angela.—I am going to tell it to Pilar.

Concha.—What's happening to this girl?

Angela.—What's the matter with you, you?

Juanita.—Be still.

Concha.—Eh?

Juanita.—Be still a minute, for I'm thinking of a verse.

Angela.—Let's hear it.

Juanita.—Wait a bit. (*After a pause in which the flame of inspiration is seen in her eyes.*) I have it.

Angela.—Let's hear it.

Concha.—Let's hear it.

Juanita.— A man I would compare,
With a vessel under sail,
And woman with the air,
That blows it where it will.

THE END.

Agueda

WHEN THE ROSES BLOOM AGAIN

(*Cuando Florezcan Los Rosales*)

A Comedy in Three Acts, in Prose

BY EDUARDO MARQUINA

Played for the first time in the Teatro de la Princesa of Madrid, in February, 1913.

CHARACTERS

ÁGUEDA (Agatha)

LOLÍN (Lola)

NURSE CONCHA

SALAZAR

PAPA GASPAR

JORGE (George) VALTIERRA

BLAS

A Boy

ACT I

A large room, converted into a modern reception hall, in the country house of DOCTOR AYEZCUA.

At the back a double glass door, opening on a pergola covered with roses. Also at the back an alcove separated from the hall by a simple curtain. In this alcove a table, books and instruments of the doctor. A very small door also leads to the outside.

At the right, a massive fireplace with a door on either side. The rear one gives access to the interior rooms; that in the foreground, to the room of SALAZAR.

At the left, a stairway with a balustrade leads to the upper rooms; another door in the foreground, to another downstairs room.

NURSE CONCHA, in the doctor's office, throws open the win-

dow. The morning light streams in. Then she opens silently the door at the back leading to the white flower-covered pergola. In the glorious fulgence of a June morning the expanse of the garden seems to stretch out in the distance.

NURSE CONCHA, after remaining a moment as if drinking in the sight of the glowing horizon, turns back into the room. At this moment LOLÍN has just entered, coming down the stairway at the side.

Lolín.—Good morning, Nurse Concha.

Nurse Concha.—Good morning, Lolín. Is the invalid going for her walk?

Lolín.—I don't feel much like it.

Nurse Concha.—It's a fine morning. Águeda must have gone out already.

Lolín.—Has she?

Nurse Concha (Pointing).—She left the doctor's door open.

Lolín.—In other years did Águeda go out so early?

Nurse Concha.—Don't you remember?

Lolín.—No.

Nurse Concha.—She always did. She makes her rounds through the town. They get up early there. (Goes out through the rear side door at the right, which remains open throughout the scene.)

Lolín.—That is so. (A pause. Places on the table the hat she is wearing.)

Nurse Concha (Entering again with the service for LOLÍN's breakfast.)—Then we are really not going out?

Lolín (Sitting down).—Really I don't care to do anything.

Nurse Concha.—Why child! Are we coming back to our old ways? Is it going to turn out that we took better care of ourselves when we were alone?

Lolín.—Oh, yes, better! . . . So much better!

Nurse Concha.—You're ungrateful! . . . What if Águeda should hear you! . . .

Lolín.—She is nowhere near by . . . who knows where she is? Since walking is no task for her!

Nurse Concha.—What is the matter with you?

Lolín.—I don't know . . . I think of other times . . . The month of May was such a pleasant one in "Los Rosales!" (The Roses.)

Nurse Concha.—Because we were alone?

Lolín.—Perhaps . . . Just think, I am good for so little, so very little, that I am scarcely any use to myself.

Nurse Concha.—Oh, what an invalid!

Lolín.—Just not in good health . . . I'll never get to be a real invalid. I know that. I keep alive thanks to the care of Papa Gaspar.

Nurse Concha.—And of a Sister of Charity—one of those who don't wear a veil.

Lolín.—That's so; thanks to the care of Águeda, too. And to yours, Nurse Concha. How many nights I have tortured you, pulling your arm when you sat by my bed watching . . . How bad I am! I owe everything to others, and instead of being grateful, I am exacting. Jorge is quite right . . .

Nurse Concha (*Brusquely interrupting her*).—That's enough, my child! Does it all stop with that?

Lolín.—With what?

Nurse Concha.—With what else? . . . Since we came to "Los Rosales" to recuperate from the last spell of the winter, for both of us there hasn't been anything else in "Los Rosales" but Don Jorge Valtierra. Since the first afternoon . . . It seems to me I can hear him yet; "My young lady, we are neighbors," . . . and such neighbors!

Lolín (*Smiling*).—Do you remember how it bothered us at first always to be meeting him?

Nurse Concha.—I remember we tried to escape him.

Lolín.—How we used to run away!

Nurse Concha.—But you turned your head to see if the gentleman appeared . . . hoping always he would!

Lolín.—I liked the way Jorge had of stopping his mare short, right close to my shoulder; so I felt her breath on my neck like a caress . . . What a pretty mare!

Nurse Concha.—From the first afternoon I saw you were going to fall in love with the mare.

Lolín.—She was just like velvet.

Nurse Concha.—Let's see: what does Don Gaspar say about your affair?

Lolín.—Papa Gaspar doesn't know anything about it; I haven't told him. I am ashamed to.

Nurse Concha.—Well . . . and my Águeda, what does she say? Haven't you told her either?

Lolín.—Far from it.

Nurse Concha.—Oh, that's it, be careful, she may bite! . . . She is going to be the ogre, is she? . . . And when it concerns her little invalid! Why, dear me, she would go to work to help you at once!

Lolín.—Perhaps.

Nurse Concha.—No perhaps about it!

Lolín.—I haven't said she wouldn't.

Nurse Concha.—Worse than that. You don't say anything, and you want me to approve when you have wrong notions.

Lolín.—Nurse Concha, let's not talk about that; it hurts me, really. Let's not talk about it!

Nurse Concha (Pretending to be vexed and displeased).—All right, let's not . . . The doctor is right; it turns out that I have too many confidences with my patients.

Lolín.—But are you going, Nurse Concha? (*NURSE CONCHA, saying nothing, very sad, gives assent with her head. LOLÍN gets up and goes towards her.*) Are you going away vexed?

Nurse Concha.—As the young lady is disposed . . .

Lolín (Embracing her and caressing her).—The young lady is disposed to have you give her a good hug to make peace, silly one! . . . (*They embrace. NURSE CONCHA smiles.*) Ha! ha! ha! . . . And the young lady is disposed to have you treat her without any mercy until you scold her as much as she deserves; as long as you do not get angry with her and leave her alone. Nurse Concha, don't leave me alone, for I feel as if I should like to die! . . . I am lonely enough already! . . . If you only knew! . . .

Nurse Concha.—My child! . . . Are you really talking seriously? Are you really suffering? . . . Be quiet, calm yourself.

Lolín.—If you only knew! . . .

Nurse Concha.—What difference does it make whether I know? You ought to tell it to the doctor!

Lolín (With a start).—No!

Nurse Concha.—Is it so serious?

Lolín.—It is terrible.

Nurse Concha.—You frighten me.

Lolín.—I, who ought to kiss the ground you all walk on I shall bring sorrow to this house; . . . you will see

Nurse Concha . . . I shall bring sorrow to this house.

Nurse Concha.—Why, what notions are these? . . .

Lolín.—They are not notions this time. My heart tells me so.

Nurse Concha.—My child!

Lolín.—How many days has it been since we saw Jorge?

Nurse Concha.—He came yesterday . . . and will come back today . . . What more do you want . . . ?

Lolín.—But yesterday . . . how many days before yesterday since we saw him?

Nurse Concha.—I don't know . . . five, perhaps.

Lolín.—Five . . . five eternities. And how many days since Águeda and Papa Gaspar came?

Nurse Concha.—Twelve; what do you mean?

Lolín.—That otherwise . . . sooner . . .

Nurse Concha.—Heavens! . . . Are you going to put the blame on them? Well, the doctor couldn't have received him more kindly, nor Águeda have been more pleasant to our dear neighbor. For I noticed that myself.

Lolín.—You noticed it, too?

Nurse Concha.—It was perfectly plain. What are you complaining about?

Lolín.—About that.

Nurse Concha.—What? (*With a tone of reproach.*) Why, child! (*A pause.*)

Lolín.—Nurse . . . How would Águeda be if she loved anyone?

Nurse Concha.—You ought to know.

Lolín.—Are you vexed again?

Nurse Concha.—I should be vexed for my Águeda's sake; because I nursed her and didn't do so badly as you think . . . Since your father died, she has been a real sister and mother to you.

Lolín.—That's true.

Nurse Concha.—I shall never forget the night at the hospital, in Madrid, when Don Gaspar was convinced that his care and science were useless. You, sick, too, hadn't seen your father for several days. Besides, you were such a little girl! . . . scarcely nine and you had always been so tiny! . . . For that reason the poor man pressed the doctor's hand as he was dying and said: "My poor sick child! My poor sick child! . . ." And with a look

that was so pleading! . . . But Águeda, kneeling at the other side of the bed, answered him, saying: "Our poor sick child! . . ." In a tone that comforted and brought a smile to the dying man!

Lolín.—My poor father!

Nurse Concha.—And so it was . . . You have been one of the family ever since. And in all these ten years have you ever lacked affection? Now can you ask how Águeda is when she loves any one?

Lolín.—Yes.

Nurse Concha.—Are we calmer now?

Lolín (After a pause).—No. But it doesn't matter. Now other things console me. (*Near the pergola, in the doorway, putting her face to a branch of climbing roses, all in bloom.*) What heavenly flowers!

Nurse Concha.—Shall we cut some?

Lolín.—Perhaps Águeda will bring some. Every year, when we used to come to "*Los Rosales*," it was Águeda's custom. Every morning, when she came back from the town, she brought flowers for her little invalid.

Nurse Concha.—This year you are better.

Lolín.—And for that reason she doesn't bring any. (*The doctor's door opens and ÁGUEDA appears, saying:*)

Águeda.—Good morning! Secrets, so early?

Lolín (Her eyes filled with tears at the sight of her friend).—How pretty Águeda is!

Águeda (To Lolín, coming to the front of the stage).—How long have we been chatting and without our breakfast?

Nurse Concha.—She has just come down. Why, it's very early! Both of you got up early this morning, I don't know why.

Lolín.—I don't know why either.

Águeda.—I, for the interest I have in the outing. I was late taking my little walk around the town, attending to some errands for my father. And you see? . . . Here I am back. I suppose Valtierra hasn't come yet.

Lolín.—Not yet.

Águeda.—Half-past seven. Let's think about the little invalid. (*Takes off her gloves, and with her hand on the milk pitcher, tests its temperature.*) It's all right . . . Sugar, Nurse.

Nurse Concha (Handing her the sugar bowl).—Here.

Águeda (To LOLÍN).—Three lumps?

Nurse Concha (Quickly, answering for LOLÍN).—Yes, three lumps.

Agueda (While she is putting them in).—Sugar isn't bad. It is very nutritious. The English stuff their children with sweets and it is a good thing. (The cup being ready, she prepares to serve it to LOLÍN.)

Lolín.—For children?

Águeda (Meaning to be affectionate).—For children . . . Even if they are big ones like you, yes. Sit down. (LOLÍN, who starts to drink the tea standing, obeys her.) Drink slowly . . . , with little sups . . . , ha! ha! ha!

Lolín (Giving back the cup).—Thank you. (NURSE CONCHA goes out through the rear side door at the right, taking the cup and service.)

Águeda.—You see? . . . And now, if you would put on your hat and take a stroll about the garden, to gather some roses to wear on your dress, you would be such a good little invalid that health would come of its own accord, without even being called.

Lolín.—Why do you wish me to wear roses?

Águeda.—They liven you up so . . . Now you are almost well; but when you wear flowers you seem more so. I want to see you all well, . . . and strong! And if you don't do your part, health will not come.

Lolín.—Will you go with me to the garden?

Águeda.—I am waiting for my father.

Lolín.—We can see him as he goes by.

Águeda.—He might go by the other door.

Lolín.—That's so. (Takes listlessly a few steps to the rear, then stops. ÁGUEDA notices her.) Other years Águeda, when you came back from the town you used to bring me these flowers that I gather now myself.

Águeda.—And this year, too; sometimes.

Lolín.—No.

Águeda.—Yes . . . Don't you remember? I wonder that you don't remember.

Lolín.—Why?

Águeda.—It isn't worth mentioning; but you went away displeased.

Lolín.—I?

Águeda.—You . . . I had brought a few roses and

one of them, half open, from a bush that is named for me. I told you that it was the very first one, and the first year it has bloomed.

Lolín.—Yes . . . that's true.

Águeda.—Well, that's all. You know that when Valtierra, who is such a friend of yours, went away that afternoon he wore that rose. That's the way you thanked me.

Lolín.—He stole it from me.

Águeda.—Ah! Congratulations! You are very intimate.

Lolín.—Are you sorry?

Águeda.—Did you take it seriously?

Lolín.—And do you say that to make fun of me?

Águeda.—You see? . . . That's the way I like you . . . Raising up your head and showing your claws to defend yourself . . . Why aren't you always like that?

Lolín (*Putting her hands to her heart as if she were in pain*).
—*Águeda* . . .

Águeda (*Changing her tone; with anxiety*).—What is the matter?

Lolín.—I can't stand any more.

Águeda (*With an impulsive movement, rushes to her*).—Are you ill? . . . Do you feel stifled? . . . Poor little girl! . . . Did I hurt you without meaning to?

Lolín (*Sobbing and overcome*).—Give me your word that you don't want to hurt me!

Águeda.—Lolín!

Lolín.—Give me your word that I shall always have you at my side in everything, in everything, . . . and never against me.

Águeda (*Who, after a pause, embraces her and kisses her on the forehead*).—Lolín!

Lolín (*Disconsolate*).—You don't promise me!

Papa Gaspar (*From the top of the stairway*).—Going! . . . Anyone that loves me, follow me!

Águeda.—Papa.

Lolín (*Running to greet him*).—Good morning, Papa Gaspar.

Papa Gaspar.—Good morning, good morning, Miss Wood-nymph. Let's see! What's the matter today? . . . Those eyes! (*Takes her to the light, leading her by the hand, and examining her slowly. ÁGUEDA awaits anxiously the examination.*) What were you talking about?

Águeda.—About Valtierra. It seems he is late, isn't he?

Lolín.—He agreed to come at nine. Are you going with us, Papa Gaspar? (*The doctor has released the girl's hands. For some moments he presses his fingers on the veins of her neck just above the left collar bone.*)

Papa Gaspar.—I can't. I really can't. How is the injured boy getting along? Do you know anything about him, daughter?

Águeda.—That's what I wanted to see you about. I have just been talking to his mother. Badly. Last night he was worse than the night before. They are anxiously waiting for your visit.

Papa Gaspar (*Turning to Lolín*).—You see I can't? . . . We doctors have no vacations unless we spend our summers in a desert. Was there anything else?

Águeda.—Nothing. The baker's little girl hasn't any fever now. And I met Blas in the plaza.

Papa Gaspar.—Singing?

Águeda.—As usual.

Papa Gaspar.—They are made of iron! Do you remember the day we arrived they came for me in a hurry?

Lolín.—Yes, I remember.

Papa Gaspar.—It was for him. Training a colt, he got a kick in his chest. I found him still unable to breathe and with indications of a traumatism in his lungs. Well, there you have him. As if nothing had happened. By the way, have yourselves introduced this morning to the cause of the accident. It was one of the best colts of your friend.

Lolín.—Whose?

Papa Gaspar (*Motioning to his daughter to keep still*).—The fellow who is coming shortly . . . What's his name?

Lolín.—Valtierra. (*After saying this, she turns her head to look into the garden.*)

Papa Gaspar (*Watching her*).—Valtierra, yes. Jorge Valtierra, isn't it?

Lolín (*Annoyed*).—Yes, Jorge.

Papa Gaspar (*Smiling*).—All right. And now while we are waiting for nine o'clock and the gentleman to come, the old man and the girl will go and take a few turns about the garden . . . won't we?

Lolín (*With much enthusiasm*).—If you wish . . .

Papa Gaspar.—Yes, I do. So you may take a drink, as I have ordered you to; from that spring down there that has a little iron in it . . . and so we may talk, too. Tell me, daughter, don't you think they have bewitched our little Sylvan Princess this summer?

Águeda (In a cool tone).—I don't know . . . perhaps!

Papa Gaspar.—Perhaps . . . But I shall break the spell. What do you think? We doctors are in real life like the magi of the fairy tales. Going. Any one who loves me, follow me.

Lolín.—Isn't Águeda coming?

Papa Gaspar.—I would prefer she didn't. The arts of the magi are secret.

Águeda (Touched by the hesitation and suffering of LOLÍN).
—Lolín!

Papa Gaspar (Already going out).—Don't detain her. I really do want to talk with her.

Águeda.—Just a moment. (*To LOLÍN who has gone over to her.*) As soon as Jorge arrives we shall come for you.

Lolín.—Will you?

Águeda (With an effort).—I promise.

Papa Gaspar.—Come, child!

Lolín (Going out after hesitating a moment and embracing ÁGUEDA impetuously).—I'm coming, Papa Gaspar. (*She goes out.*)

Águeda (After a pause).—Too late! . . . And if it were real rivalry it wouldn't be so bad. But there's no risk for me . . . And this poor child! . . . I wish I were really wicked. (*Takes a few steps; goes and looks out of the window.* SALAZAR enters from the right. He examines first the titles of some books on the table; then he sees ÁGUEDA who, looking out of the window, absorbed, has not heard him enter.)

Salazar (Coughs slightly to attract the attention of ÁGUEDA. The latter, surprised, turns around to look).—Águeda.

Águeda.—Señor Salazar!

Salazar.—Good morning.

Águeda.—Have you just come in?

Salazar.—Just a moment ago.

Águeda.—Have you been served? Did you ask for your coffee?

Salazar.—I shall wait to breakfast with the rest. Isn't this the day for the excursion to the stables?

Águeda.—Exactly.

Salazar.—Has Señor Valtierra come yet?

Águeda.—No.

Salazar.—Have the doctor and the girl gone out?

Águeda.—Are you trying to get away from me?

Salazar.—Oh, my company is not especially agreeable!

Águeda.—You are mistaken, Salazar. And besides, just at this moment it is very opportune.

Salazar (Astonished).—What do you say?

Águeda.—Most opportune. I have a question I want to ask you, Salazar.

Salazar (With an interest slightly exaggerated).—Let's hear it.

Águeda.—I ask with no malice.

Salazar.—Perhaps with no malice, but not without interest.

Águeda.—Why do you think that? . . .

Salazar.—That what you are going to ask me interests you? Why you were so buried in thought over it that you didn't even hear me come in.

Águeda.—And how do you know I was thinking about it?

Salazar.—You have said that I came in opportunely . . . I must suppose that my coming coincided with the moment you were formulating your question.

Águeda.—I was absent-minded, nothing more. (*A pause.* Feigning indifference, *ÁGUEDA* decides to ask.) What do you think of Jorge de Valtierra?

Salazar.—I? . . . Not very much.

Águeda.—Good or bad?

Salazar.—It is necessary for you to be specific. For in the abstract one doesn't think anything of men, either good or bad.

Águeda.—Answer in general. According to that criterion, somewhat vague, which we use in saying of a man: he has a sound temperament or he has a morbid temperament.

Salazar.—Criterion and vague are two words that quarrel with each other when they are put together. For criterion is exactness itself. Are you impatient?

Águeda.—No, go on.

Salazar.—Señor Valtierra seems to me a well-balanced man.

Águeda.—That is a good deal.

Salazar.—It is everything. In morals there is no greater perfection.

Águeda.—And you affirm that Valtierra . . . ?

Salazar.—Is a well-balanced man, yes. He satisfies fully all the moral needs of a good producer and trainer of colts.

Águeda.—Are you making fun of me? I do not know whether you are praising or censuring him.

Salazar.—Neither. I am judging him in a general way. As you do not wish to be specific . . . The moral life of Jorge is of no interest. It is a question of a personality with few needs. He spends little; makes up easily what he spends. It is an equilibrium slightly negative, but we always find an equilibrium.

Águeda.—Doesn't he seem to you a man of impulses?

Salazar.—It depends on the course his sentiments run. It is not in him, himself. As the motive force of water is not in the water, but in the height from which it falls. Do you understand me?

Águeda.—Clearly. Valtierra is, in your opinion, one of those characters we may consider the product of circumstances.

Salazar.—Exactly. With one reservation. Many times we ourselves create or modify circumstances.

Águeda.—Of course . . . And in that case?

Salazar.—In that case, he renounces his right to create or modify them. He limits himself to accepting or refusing them.

Águeda (Passionately).—That's not so true!

Salazar (Coldly).—What?

Águeda.—At least in one moment of his life . . .

Salazar.—When? . . . Let us come to that . . . The rich heir of powerful manufacturers of the Basque Provinces, an engineer with a Belgian degree, validated in Spain, and a "famous sportsman" as they say now-a-days, he sells one day his furnaces and machinery, closes his factories and shops, buys land, tries different crops, different breeds, and ends by establishing in a few years these magnificent stables that I visited the other day and which, in their class, are a wonder, unique in Spain. . . . Isn't that so?

Águeda.—Well it seems to me a man capable of breaking with a powerful and convenient tradition in order to follow new roads, aside from the energy of character needed to carry it out, is not a passive product of circumstances.

Salazar.—Why not? The crisis of great industries is today a fact all over Europe. The propaganda of certain philosophical theories gave it the initiative and social struggles brought it to a head. Well, agriculture, which colonial money made fashionable, offers a safe recourse. In passing from the furnaces to the fields Valtierra has only yielded to the pressure of expediency; he has temporized with determinate circumstances that afforded him a standard of life; he is a good conservator. Remember that. Perhaps it may be of use to you. In his acts as in his feelings, Valtierra never innovates, he conserves. Shall we be a little more specific?

Águeda.—If you insist . . .

Salazar.—Through gallantry . . . and gratitude. It seems to me the matter interests you and besides I am certain of never having merited so many minutes of your attention. Whatever the reason, I am grateful.

Águeda.—What an injustice! . . . A man who is an oracle in the house says that! For years, all around me, no one takes a step without consulting you.

Salazar.—That is true. Doctor Ayezcuá does me the honor to value my capabilities much more than they are worth. He does not consult me. He talks over with me everyday affairs and we usually have the same general ideas. But the daughter of Doctor Ayezcuá, whom I have the honor to address, not only does not imitate her father in this valuation, but is manifestly hostile to me and avoids talking to me.

Águeda.—Because it mortifies me to begin a conversation knowing that after a few words I shall be loaded with advice. I can't help it.

Salazar.—And if the advice is to the point?

Águeda.—Exactly because it is to the point. It worries me that others should be right rather than myself. I persist in taking the opposite side and end by losing. It makes me angry. If sometimes I avoid talking with you about important matters, it is in order to agree with you, so don't complain.

Salazar.—You must have real reasons, Águeda, that make you act in this manner. Shall we try to find out what they are?

Águeda (After a pause).—Let us talk about Valtierra.

Salazar.—It is the same thing.

Águeda.—What?

Salazar.—It is the same thing.

Águeda.—Why?

Salazar.—Because a time will come when one can't talk to you about that gentleman without talking about you.

Águeda (After a pause and starting to go out at the back). Well then, let us leave things as they are.

Salazar (Stepping back as if to stop her).—Not now.

Águeda (With haughtiness, dryly).—What do you say?

Salazar.—Not now.

Águeda (Smiling ironically, but vexed at heart).—So you are becoming insistent!

Salazar (Insisting and taking a step towards her, an emotion in his voice not there before).—For your good, Águeda. Do not forget, I beg you, if this persistence mortifies you, the loyal and sincere affection I feel for you forces me to persist.

Águeda (With a bit of revengeful cruelty).—Ah! . . . And you have feelings?

Salazar.—Do you doubt it because I don't show them? Do not doubt it. My feelings do not proclaim themselves, but I owe to them some gray hairs.

Águeda (With irony).—I shall end by feeling sorry for you.

Salazar.—I have never tried to inspire sympathy in any one. (*Starts to go out at the back.*)

Águeda.—Are you going?

Salazar.—Isn't that what you wished?

Águeda.—No, not now. Pardon me, Salazar. It has seemed to me from your last words that you are hiding something and we must unveil this unknown. Now, I am the one who wants to talk. I am beginning to be afraid!

Salazar (Turning around; his voice grave and full of emotion as a moment before).—It may be true and, at any rate, it ought to be true. Águeda, by that which you love most in the world, do not insist this time in refusing advice; not mine; I have given none; I do not intend to give you any. That which you are formulating categorically in the depths

of your conscience. To do so would mean unhappiness for all your life. You are a noble girl; but you have the illusion of independence, of self-will, of the cult of the individual. You have been educated in this atmosphere. Unfortunately, you never knew a mother and I believe it is a mother's influence that is lacking in your heart, Águeda. Fathers educate their daughters to be women; mothers educate them to be mothers. And in this slight shade of difference there is a mass of indefinable submissiveness, a desire to live for others that you do not yet feel without protesting.

Águeda.—Am I so bad?

Salazar.—I should keep silent, if you were. I am aware that I am speaking to you in a moment when within your heart there sound two voices equally imperative and contrary. Yield to the more noble.

Águeda.—I have the right to live.

Salazar.—That is not the more noble.

Águeda.—I am hurting no one; no one has taken pains to restrain me by a tender confidence; one of those that, by a feeling of sympathy, force one's free-will.

Salazar.—What a poor excuse and how little you really value it!

Águeda.—At any rate, I am mistress of my own acts. I don't understand by what right you speak to me.

Salazar.—By none, unless I speak in the name of your own self.

Águeda.—I myself believe that life has the last word.

Salazar.—Which may be a judgment.

Águeda.—A bad course. Threats incite me. Oh, if I were always like this! What more would I wish than a real, genuine sorrow, a constant one, even though the triumph might be a delusion!

Salazar.—I believe that, but there are sorrows that kill.

Águeda (*Seriously*).—Señor Salazar! (*The small door at the rear opens.*)

Salazar (*Quickly*).—Hush! It is he!

Águeda (*Impetuously*).—Jorge!

Jorge Valtierra (*Entering*).—Good morning, Águeda . . . Friend Salazar . . . (*Takes ÁGUEDA's hand effusively. Turns to take SALAZAR's.*

Salazar.—Will you allow me to relieve you a little? (*SALAZAR takes from him his hat and whip.*)

Jorge Valtierra.—And my dear doctor? . . . And Lolín?

Salazar (*From the back of the stage where he places VALTIERRA's hat and whip on a chair*).—In the park. I shall go to look for them.

Águeda (*Who has just rung a bell, quickly*).—Nurse Concha will go. I don't think they will be long.

Salazar.—Don't deprive me of the pleasure of surprising them. These idylls of the old man and the girl are my special prerogative.

Águeda.—Then, let's all three go.

Salazar.—That would be cruel to Valtierra. He must feel like sitting down a while.

Jorge Valtierra.—No, as far as I am concerned . . . Riding doesn't tire me. It is like a galvanic battery; on the contrary, it tones me up and exhilarates me.

Salazar (*Starting to leave, significantly to ÁGUEDA*).—Restrain yourself!

Nurse Concha (*Appearing at the rear side door on the right, to SALAZAR, in passing him*).—Did you ring?

Salazar.—The young lady did. (*He goes out.*)

Águeda.—Serve us. Do you take coffee in the morning, Jorge?

Jorge Valtierra (*Absently-mindedly leafing over some magazines on the table*). I have already breakfasted.

Águeda.—We have been so patient as to wait for you.

Jorge Valtierra.—Then I shall be delighted to take a little fruit.

Águeda (*To NURSE CONCHA*).—Bring some fruit, too.

Nurse Concha.—Very well. (*In a low voice after having looked around with a frank interest.*) And Lolín?

Águeda.—She is coming right away. Have you something to say?

Nurse Concha.—Perhaps.

Águeda (*Giving her a look and turning her back*).—Serve us. (*NURSE CONCHA goes out vexed and plainly showing it.*)

Jorge Valtierra (*Raising his eyes from the table and as if avoiding a tête-à-tête*).—This Señor Salazar is a charming fellow. The other afternoon he came to see me. It seems my stables interested him. He has a knowledge of everything.

Águeda.—Did he give you some advice?

Jorge Valtierra.—Considerable. And to the point. Is he a doctor, too?

Águeda.—Hardly. He began medicine a few years ago. His friendship with Papa dates from that time. For, though from his age you wouldn't think so, Salazar is in this house my father's particular friend.

Jorge Valtierra.—I am pleased to know it. At first, I took him for a physician and supposed he was an assistant of the doctor.

Águeda.—His friend and his oracle. If you want anything from the doctor, bribe Salazar.

Jorge Valtierra.—Did he finish his study of medicine?

Águeda.—He laid it aside in a few years and since then has been studying moral philosophy.

Jorge Valtierra.—What for?

Águeda.—Just to know it.

Jorge Valtierra (Without comprehending).—Exactly.

Águeda.—It seems that he is a scion of the old Castilian culture. The race is moralistic. Talk about it with Salazar. The Santillanas, the Lopez de Áyalas, the Manriques, the Hurtado de Mendozas, and I don't know who all! . . . are his masters. Talk about it with him if it interests you.

Jorge Valtierra (With a certain frankness).—I don't believe I should be of any use for studies of that kind.

Águeda (Laughing heartily).—No, really, Valtierra! I don't believe you would. (*Turns to the table, piling up the books and magazines to make room for the breakfast.*)

Jorge Valtierra (Following her with his eyes and with a naive misgiving).—Is that a fault?

Águeda.—Did I say so?

Jorge Valtierra.—It seemed you were laughing to make fun of me.

Águeda.—The idea! (*She has gathered an armful of the books and magazines and put them on a chair at the back.*)

Jorge Valtierra.—And does Salazar stay at your house all the time?

Águeda (Stopping with her load halfway and turning her head with a touch of mischief and coquetry).—Does it interest you much to know?

Jorge Valtierra.—If it is not an indiscretion . . .

Águeda (Smiling and going on).—No, it isn't. He spends

the summers with us at "*Los Rosales*," and the winters with his mother who is still living.

Jorge Valtierra.—In Madrid?

Águeda.—In a small town in Castile, I don't remember the name. Pardon me. (*Puts down her load and comes back towards VALTIERRA, asking:*) Do you think of anything else?

Jorge Valtierra (After a pause).—Nothing . . . (*ÁGUEDA sits down on the other side.*) Yes, *Águeda*, I should like us to finish making out our program. It worries me a little.

Águeda.—Everything worries you.

Jorge Valtierra.—For the past few days, yes. And it is rather strange for me.

Águeda.—Well, go on. Let us know what tortures are in store for us today.

Jorge Valtierra.—Our excursion is of absolutely no interest to you. I began to fear that yesterday.

Águeda.—Don't be stupid. I have dreamt about it! I am even more fond of horses than you.

Jorge Valtierra.—Really? Do you know something about them?

Águeda.—Nothing. For that very reason I enjoy them more than you. I admire their good qualities and rarely notice their defects. Salazar told me that your stables were marvels.

Jorge Valtierra.—Yes, they are beginning to be. In heavy draught horses I believe I have almost reached perfection.

Águeda.—Perfection?

Jorge Valtierra.—Thanks to a fine English sire. I had the idea of breeding him to a Navarrese mare, very light but with a good bone, to increase the weight . . . and you will see the result. In height they excel the Percherons by two hands and have much more style. They are bay, chestnut and black. I would get saddle horses with a little careful selection. The Percherons of the Belgian type never give . . . (*ÁGUEDA can not restrain her laughter.*) What are you laughing at?

Águeda.—I don't understand a word of it.

Jorge Valtierra.—I beg your pardon . . . It's my fault. I am boring you.

Águeda (Quickly).—No, not that!

Jorge Valtierra.—Well, let's come to the program. You laughter disturbs me!

Águeda.—And I am grateful to you for being able to leave out my laughter!

Jorge Valtierra.—Really!

Águeda.—I haven't many occasions for laughter in my life. So, I always have saved up the desire to laugh and be happy! . . . You understand. My patients would not understand it.

Jorge Valtierra.—How good you are!

Águeda.—No, I am not; but living among the sick and suffering, I always worry because I can't laugh.

Jorge Valtierra.—That means that if you had to make the world, you would suppress sickness and suffering.

Águeda.—Yes.

Jorge Valtierra.—Do you see? I do it in my stables.

Águeda.—How?

Jorge Valtierra.—I select the sound and perfect specimens.

Águeda.—And the others?

Jorge Valtierra.—The others are sacrificed. That's selection.

Águeda.—Well, I don't like that.

Jorge Valtierra.—The result is splendid.

Águeda.—But I would think of the ones sacrificed.

Jorge Valtierra.—You are hard to please.

Águeda.—Very. (Change.) Shall we take up the program?

Jorge Valtierra (After a pause).—We shall walk to Fuenfría. Is that all right? At Fuenfría my men will be waiting with a carriage.... From there the sun would bother us. We shall arrive about ten or half-past. We shall visit the various places . . .

Águeda.—Are there many of them?

Jorge Valtierra.—The stables . . . they are like parlor, don't be afraid. We shall visit the hospital, the carriage houses . . .

Águeda.—In the hospital I shall stay a while. I see that And there will not be time for any more.

Jorge Valtierra.—Do you think not? There is a lot more.

Águeda.—I shall be very tired.

Jorge Valtierra.—You will make an effort, won't you?

Águeda.—What else is there?

Jorge Valtierra.—Why, everything outside.

Águeda.—I know very well what we shall do. Be still. You don't know a thing about making out programs.

Jorge Valtierra.—We might leave out the carriage houses and go to lunch . . .

Águeda.—With the fresh impression of the poor sick animals we have just seen. Thank you! One day, if possible, I should like to separate the clinic from the dining room.

Jorge Valtierra.—Then . . .

Águeda.—Then let's allow a half hour for the carriage houses, and then be through. Harness, straps, carriages, saddles . . . Polished metal trimmings, clean leather . . . All that is pleasant, sumptuous, diverting. One may talk about excursions and walks. They will call up memories and whet the appetite marvellously. Look out!

Jorge Valtierra.—I am charmed.

Águeda.—Lunch at twelve.

Jorge Valtierra.—On the terrace.

Águeda.—Little tables for coffee in the park. An hour for chatting and break up when we like. And when the sun gets a little less fierce, all the outdoor program you wish.

Jorge Valtierra.—Exactly. A perfect day. I say it for myself.

Águeda.—For everyone, I believe.

Jorge Valtierra.—I fear it may be somewhat tiring for you girls.

Águeda.—Is there much walking?

Jorge Valtierra.—Quite a bit.

Águeda.—I never get tired.

Jorge Valtierra.—But Lolín . . .

Águeda (Changing tone).—Ah, yes, Lolín! That's so, of course, Lolín . . . (*There ensues a silence, embarrassing for both . . .* ÁGUEDA breaks it by turning to the door at the back.) And it's getting late!

Jorge Valtierra.—No.

Águeda (Coming forward again with a certain soft irony).—Pardon me. In making out the program, I have thought too much about myself. I forgot I was doing it for the rest.

Jorge Valtierra.—No, Agueda.

Águeda.—Yes, but it doesn't matter. It is my habit. Since I was a little girl. I began in the clinic by making out schedules. At six-thirty, thermometer. From seven to

eight, medicine, food, walk, reading. And as I was telling you, I only complained of not being able to put in sometimes: "At such and such an hour, two minutes for the nurse to laugh a little." It is my lot.

Jorge Valtierra.—Águeda . . . I should like . . .

Águeda.—That the two minutes might have been put in the day's program. Well, apparently I asked a good deal and it couldn't be. What should one expect! Thank you for the intention.

Jorge Valtierra.—Águeda . . .

Águeda.—What were you saying?

Jorge Valtierra.—We two must have a talk.

Águeda.—Aren't we talking?

Jorge Valtierra.—About other things . . . a long talk. (*LOLÍN and the doctor are coming through the pergola, followed by SALAZAR.*)

Águeda (*Calling attention to them*).—It is going to be difficult. Some other day!

Jorge Valtierra (*Approaching her, in a voice low and urgent, with the firm energy of a man of force*).—No, Águeda! . . . Today! (*The others come in. At the words of the doctor, VALTIERRA, controlling his feelings, advances to meet them. ÁGUEDA crosses the stage and stops, leaning her arms on the wooden stair rail; looking without seeing, oblivious to what is passing, still tingling from the passionate energy that JORGE has put into his last words.*)

Papa Gaspar (*Entering*).—Making yourself at home, Señor de Valtierra?

Jorge Valtierra.—My dear doctor. Do you feel like going with us? (*LOLÍN doesn't take her eyes from him. She has a somewhat pained expression, noticing the attitude of ÁGUEDA.*) Lolín . . .

Lolín.—Jorge. (*JORGE, after this greeting, and as if he were interested in the doctor's words, continues listening to him.*)

Papa Gaspar.—Perhaps . . . It is going to be difficult, for we doctors haven't a minute of our own. Perhaps I may. I took you a little by surprise, Señor de Valtierra!

Jorge Valtierra.—How is that?

Lolín (*Much vexed*).—Papa Gaspar . . .

Papa Gaspar (*Smiling with the kindly smile of a cunning old man*).—Nothing. (*Pause.*) Do you know, daughter, it was true about the spell.

Águeda (*Recovering herself*).—It was? . . . So much the better.

Papa Gaspar.—What is the matter with you?

Águeda.—Nothing. (*To NURSE CONCHA who enters followed by a maid with the breakfast.*) Did you bring some fruit?

Nurse Concha.—Yes.

Águeda.—Breakfast is served when you like. (*The doctor and SALAZAR go to the table; the latter sits down to breakfast, saying nothing. The doctor sips a cup of coffee standing. ÁGUEDA arranges some fruit on a plate. LOLÍN and JORGE remain at one side.*)

Jorge Valtierra (*To LOLÍN*).—You look much better than you did.

Lolín.—I am tired, but don't say anything about it.

Jorge Valtierra.—And we were so well yesterday!

Lolín.—I am afraid of spoiling your holiday.

Jorge Valtierra.—No!

Lolín.—Would you be sorry on my account, or on account of the holiday?

Jorge Valtierra.—Lolín!

Lolín.—I am going to serve you . . . if you have no objections.

Jorge Valtierra.—I shall thank you in advance.

Lolín (*Approaching the table and beginning to serve*).—Coffee, Jorge?

Águeda.—No; Señor Valtierra wishes some fruit; here it is. (*Offers him the plate.*)

Jorge Valtierra (*A little disturbed*).—Yes, I thought I would have some fruit. (*Takes the plate from ÁGUEDA.*)

Lolín (*Disappointed and sad*).—Ah! (*NURSE CONCHA comes forward with the doctor's hat and surgical case.*)

Salazar.—Are you going, doctor?

Papa Gaspar.—Yes, I have a plan. I shall visit my morning patients and at eleven I'll start for the stables. We shall lunch together if you will keep a place for me.

Jorge Valtierra.—Of course we will!

Papa Gaspar.—Good-bye, gentlemen. Good-bye, daughter . . . Good-bye, Lolín. (*Going out. NURSE CONCHA also goes out at the right.*)

Jorge Valtierra.—And we, are we all ready? It is getting almost time to start.

Águeda (Animated; a little excited).—I'll be ready in a second. (To LOLÍN.) What are you going to wear?

Lolín.—I don't know . . . we shall see . . . Why?

Águeda.—So we'll be dressed alike.

Lolín (Smiling with melancholy).—No; by no means.

Águeda (Flying up the stairway).—As you like. (Meanwhile, SALAZAR has finished his breakfast, left the table, taken out his cigar-case, and offered a cigar to VALTIERRA; he takes another cigar and they light them. Scarcely has ÁGUEDA disappeared when JORGE, as if suddenly recovering his lost liberty, hastens to LOLÍN.)

Jorge Valtierra.—Lolín, do you really feel ill?

Lolín.—Oh, yes, Jorge, yes! I am so upset! (LOLÍN sinks into a chair, overcome. JORGE takes her hand.)

Jorge Valtierra.—How cold your hands are!

Salazar.—What is the matter?

Jorge Valtierra.—Lolín is not well.

Lolín.—Well, yes . . . of course I am! I have seldom felt so strong. I feel so keyed up, as if my blood were circulating very fast. Don't be frightened, Jorge! (Smiling.) Don't look that way! It will pass soon.

Jorge Valtierra.—Does our smoking bother you?

Lolín.—I feel as if I were somewhat stifled. But it is passing.

Jorge Valtierra.—Anyway, it isn't possible for us to go.

Salazar.—We must not go.

Lolín.—Oh, yes, indeed! . . . With all my heart I beg you! No, don't change anything for me! . . . What will Águeda think? (She stands up with an effort and instinctively puts her hands to her heart as if in pain.) It's all right now . . . See? It's all right. I'll be back right away. (Tries to go towards the stairway, making an effort.)

Salazar.—No, Lolín.

Lolín.—Yes, for pity's sake, Salazar! . . . Help me, Salazar! . . . I don't want Águeda to know. I want everything done just as arranged. . . . Jorge!

Jorge Valtierra.—You are the first consideration. I don't want you to suffer.

Lolín.—I am not suffering now. It passes quickly. It has happened to me before . . . A little oppression,

n't it so, Salazar? And in a couple of hours, resting a little, am all right, isn't that true?

Salazar.—It is not possible for you to go.

Lolín.—I shall not go. I shall stay in my room and rest little . . . And at eleven, with Papa Gaspar, I'll come to find you. And Águeda can not be displeased. I'll tell her that I feel a little tired, oh, anything . . . and you two will help me, won't you? (*ÁGUEDA, dressed now for the day's excursion, appears on the stairway.*)

Águeda.—Shall we go? (*Seeing LOLÍN.*) But are you still here? (*With a sudden suspicion.*) What has happened?

Lolín.—Nothing. I stayed here talking and got to feeling a bit lazy. You go on and walk. I'll come with Papa Gaspar. I have seen everything anyway!

Águeda.—Aren't you well?

Lolín.—Never felt better.

Águeda.—Don't you feel oppressed? Can you breathe easily?

Lolín.—I just feel irresistibly indolent.

Águeda.—Well, you will come with my father. That is understood.

Salazar (*Looking at ÁGUEDA.*).—And besides, I'll stay and come with her.

Águeda (*Meeting his look.*).—You? . . . Oh! All right.

Jorge Valtierra (*Uncertain*).—Then . . .

Águeda (*Resolutely, believing that all has been the result of SALAZAR's cunning and continuing to look at him.*).—Then we can do this: we can send the carriage from Fuenfría so you can come more comfortably. (*Turning to LOLÍN and patting her on the cheek.*) Agreed?

Lolín (*With an effort to smile as if satisfied.*).—Agreed. Good-bye.

Águeda.—Good-bye. Come on, Jorge.

Jorge Valtierra.—Coming! Good-bye. (*Both go out. As they pass through the door, ÁGUEDA takes JORGE'S arm and they disappear slowly. Events move rapidly to the end.*)

Lolín (*Watching them disappear and hesitating*).—Salazar!

Salazar.—What's the matter?

Lolín.—I don't know . . . help me to walk . . . where I can't see them . . . How happy they are

How happy! (She stifles, scarcely able to breathe, raises her hands to her heart and falls into SALAZAR's arms.)

Salazar (In a tone of unmistakable alarm and command).—Águeda! Águeda! (ÁGUEDA and JORGE return hurriedly, alarmed.)

Águeda.—What? What has happened?

Salazar.—Her heart . . . I don't know . . . I know very little about such things . . .

Águeda (Falling at LOLÍN's feet).—My darling Lolín!

Lolín (Caressing her with one hand).—Nothing! It is nothing!

Águeda (To Salazar).—Call some one! (To JORGE). My father! . . . Go for him! . . . Quick, right away—(JORGE goes out at the back. NURSE CONCHA and a maid enter, hurrying to the sick girl.)

Nurse Concha (Aided by the maid, carrying the patient).—Right here. In the room downstairs. Slowly. (To ÁGUEDA.) Some ice! (NURSE CONCHA and the maid go out with the patient, left.)

Águeda.—Salazar!

Salazar (Serious and with emotion).—You see what suffering is?

Águeda.—Oh, don't finish! I am not so wicked as you may imagine. You hate me! (She goes out. SALAZAR raises his eyes to heaven and puts his hand to his forehead.)

Curtain.

ACT II

Same scene as in the previous act. An afternoon in August. About two months have passed since the first act.

On the stage, NURSE CONCHA, ÁGUEDA, BLAS and a boy, BLAS' son, not over eleven years of age. ÁGUEDA, standing, has just finished bandaging the boy's arm. She wears her white nurse's apron and has at her side a small glass and nickel table on which is burning an alcohol lamp. On it also a pair of forceps, two or three gauze bandages, and some sterilized cotton, protruding from its metal case. BLAS, also standing, somewhat agitated, is helping finish the small operation. NURSE CONCHA supports the boy's arm. She also wears a white hospital apron.

Águeda.—Does it hurt yet?

Boy.—Not so much.

Águeda.—Tomorrow you will forget all about it. And how was it, Blas?

Blas.—You ask how it was, señorita? Why these kids are the dickens!

Boy.—Don't scold me, for I wasn't to blame.

Blas.—What? He sneaked away from the house with some other scamps, without his mother's knowing it. They went to the quarry and I don't know how, for you can't pull a word out of them, they must have set fire to a charge that burned their hands. You've seen it yourself, young lady, his whole arm was a blister. His clothes were ruined. You ought to have them stuffed down you and see if you wouldn't learn a lesson.

Águeda (To Nurse Concha).—Safety pins . . . two or three . . . We had better fasten it well. Another. This one hasn't any point.

Blas.—Do you have to open it again?

Águeda.—Not now.

Blas.—For if you do, I don't want to see it. It makes me feel . . . I don't know how.

Águeda.—There you are, my brave boy. He hasn't whimpered once.

Nurse Concha.—And it's all fine. Couldn't be better. Blas, you may rest easy.

Blas.—Not so bad. And they talk about children! Colts, colts! Give me colts, for they've got more sense!

Nurse Concha (While ÁGUEDA puts out the lamp and gathers up the other things on the table).—But there was that one that kicked you the day we came.

Blas.—That's so . . . I thought I was bad off. And the doctor, too, It will be just two months next Sunday. Well, you see. I hardly remember it now. After all, it was my fault. But this lad. (*Pointing to his son with a sort of rough tenderness*) is delicate and a baby and a little thing hurts him. If it had been my arm, it wouldn't have hurt so bad as to see it hurt him. Children! Children! . . . Who told you to go to the quarry, you runaway?

Águeda.—It's all over now; it won't amount to anything.

Blas.—Thanks to you, señorita. May heaven reward you . . . May you have all the things you wish for.

Águeda.—May God listen to you. (*Starts to go out at the back; runs against JORGE VALTIERRA who comes rushing in, his racquet in his hand, in white flannel trousers and tennis shoes.*)

Jorge Valtierra.—Have you forgotten us, Águeda? What has happened? . . . Was it you, Blas?

Blas.—My very self, Don Jorge.

Jorge Valtierra.—Another accident?

Blas.—Not I; this scamp . . . And yet they talk about children!

Boy.—I wasn't to blame.

Águeda.—Don't worry him any more.

Blas (*Because the boy raises his bandaged arm to dry his tears.*)—Here! . . . What are you doing, rascal? Put that arm down. Don't dirty up what clothes are still good! Isn't that right, señorita? We'll return them sure, and the white woolen, too. The wife will wash them. Come, come on! (*As he leaves.*) Good day.

Jorge Valtierra.—Good-bye, Blas!

Águeda.—And come back in a few days.

Blas (*Going out of sight.*)—Thank you, señorita.

Jorge Valtierra (*Who has gone over to the chair where his straw hat, cane and kodak are.*)—What a rough fellow, but how good hearted! (*There is a short pause. JORGE takes his kodak and tries to focus it on the graceful silhouette of ÁGUEDA which stands out sharply against the magnificent background of the park.*) Don't move!

Águeda.—What's that? Another! . . .

Jorge Valtierra.—A thousand.

Águeda (*Trying to take off her nurse's apron.*)—Wait.

Jorge Valtierra.—No! I want to get you just like that.

Águeda.—What a shame!

Jorge Valtierra.—Don't move. Now you are my prisoner in this little cage, a charming likeness of a nurse, twentieth century. The Sister of Charity has passed into history . . . Romanticism! One moment!

Águeda (*Straightening up, a little stiff.*)—Make it short.

Jorge Valtierra.—That's all.

Águeda (*Coming in and taking off the apron.*)—And what more have you now than before?

Jorge Valtierra.—A shadow.

Águeda.—Wouldn't a memory be just the same?

Jorge Valtierra.—Oh, no!

Águeda.—Of course it would! It is more easily effaced.

Jorge Valtierra.—Why do you say what you do not believe? I could remember you all my life as I saw you when I came in: busy at the table or just finishing bandaging the little boy's arm, wearing your nurse's apron that you put on to attend him. But here I have you at a moment apart, with the same apron, that is true, but with a look, gesture, a pose, an interim of your life, which has been for me alone. Do you see the difference?

Águeda.—You are getting a bad habit.

Jorge Valtierra.—What do you say?

Águeda.—You used to have a lightness of spirit, an unconsciousness of life, that was restful.

Jorge Valtierra.—That is true. I myself, remember that I used to pass through life without knowing it. As if I were being carried along . . . And now?

Águeda.—I don't know! Now you are getting the mania of relating things, of seeking a meaning in everything.

Jorge Valtierra.—That's so . . . but it happens to me only here.

Águeda.—It is perhaps the place.

Jorge Valtierra.—Or you? . . .

Águeda.—Why? . . . I am little disposed to philosophize. I should like to have wings in order to fly above everything, in an egoistic flight, taking the sun for myself, and without caring for the shadow I might cast over the lives of others.

Jorge Valtierra.—But that is not so!

Águeda.—Perhaps I am not that way. Would that I were! The other way is so bitter! (*While JORGE puts the kodak back in its place, she smiles.*) Let's go . . .

Jorge Valtierra.—We have got into a sad mood.

Águeda.—Why did you come to look for me?

Jorge Valtierra.—We missed you. Salazar asked about you.

Águeda (Affecting indifference).—And Lolín?

Jorge Valtierra.—She did, too. Let us go. (*Starts to go out.*)

Águeda (Detaining him).—How do you find Lolín the past few days, Jorge?

Jorge Valtierra (As if with a sigh of satisfaction).—Very well . . . better than ever!

Águeda (*Quickly*).—Really? (*Changing tone.*) My father doesn't. He fears I don't know what . . . (*Becoming animated.*) To me, she seems stronger, more animated, more gay.

Jorge Valtierra.—She walks every day all the way to the hermitage in less than an hour without getting tired.

Águeda.—Do you go with her?

Jorge Valtierra.—She was telling about it herself just a moment ago.

Águeda.—She has been quite another person since her sudden collapse that morning.

Jorge Valtierra.—It wasn't serious.

Águeda.—Oh, no! . . . Reassure yourself. Her heart still troubles her, but in this case there is no lesion. When the anemia is cured, she will be all right.

Jorge Valtierra.—And especially in the country! . . . Then how do you explain the doctor's fears?

Águeda.—I don't know. Perhaps as a reproach to me.

Jorge Valtierra.—How?

Águeda.—My laughter! As usual! And perhaps he is right. Many days it happens every two minutes.

Jorge Valtierra.—No.

Águeda.—Have you counted them?

Jorge Valtierra.—I couldn't.

Águeda.—Why not?

Jorge Valtierra.—When you laugh I forget everything; even the passing of time. (*There is a pause. They are near the door. A branch of the climbing rose protrudes into the room; at the end of it, is a flower which JORGE seizes.*) This rose . . .

Águeda.—No. (*JORGE holds the flower in his hand.*) There is no help for it now. And I am superstitious. Look . . . (*Pointing to the branch.*) There are no more. It is the last one of the summer.

Jorge Valtierra (*Laying it aside*).—Then I don't wish you to have it.

Águeda.—Thank you.

Jorge Valtierra.—Why didn't you come sooner to "Los Rosales?"

Águeda.—You are a good friend, Jorge. I shall try to keep your friendship all my life. (*Holds out her hand to JORGE quickly.*)

Jorge Valtierra (*Taking her hand and drawing it to him*).—Águeda!

Águeda (*Trying to withdraw it; it is too late*).—No, Jorge, don't! (*JORGE succeeds in carrying it to his lips; a furtive kiss.*) Jorge!

Jorge Valtierra (*With the voice of one asking forgiveness*).—The first. So it doesn't matter that there are no more flowers.

Águeda.—Who knows!

Lolín (*Her voice in the distance*).—Águeda!

Jorge Valtierra (*Quickly releasing ÁGUEDA's hand and moving away*).—Lolín!

Águeda (*Calm*).—Do you see? (*Smiling, sorrowfully, moving away from the door, comes to the front of the stage.*)

Jorge Valtierra (*Preoccupied*).—What shall we say?

Águeda (*Has seated herself at the table and opens a book*).—You, whatever you wish! (*She reads.* LOLÍN enters at the back, carrying also her racquet. *In her whole appearance there is a change, greater self-possession, more confidence in voice and movement.* The girl of the first act is now a woman; suffering has caused this transition. *Perhaps her illness has advanced slightly, but only an expert eye could detect it.* Now a secret and persistent will-power sustains her weak physique. ÁGUEDA has not even turned her head; JORGE remains at the back, near the chair where he laid the flower, LOLÍN looks at JORGE and ÁGUEDA before speaking.)

Lolín.—We got tired of waiting for you! You ought to have told us you had made up your mind not to play any more.

Jorge Valtierra.—I was coming just now.

Lolín.—And Águeda? (*A pause.* ÁGUEDA continues reading without replying) She doesn't even hear me. (*Goes to her side and caressing her, says:*) Águeda . . . you see me anyway, don't you?

Águeda (*Raising her eyes and smiling*).—There is still light.

Lolín.—And so bright! Well, I tell you we have just got along without you anyway. Mister Castle took Jorge's place to good advantage, and Salazar and I had hard work playing against him.

Águeda (*Absent-mindedly*).—Those English! . . .

Jorge Valtierra.—Where did Mister Castle stay?

Lolín.—He was leaving. He told me to say good-bye to you for him.

Jorge Valtierra.—No?

Lolín.—He said there is a good deal going on today at the stables.

Jorge Valtierra (Affecting interest and annoyed).—That's the very reason. He can't be leaving without seeing me. Shall I find him there yet?

Lolín.—It's very possible; he stayed at the tennis court with Salazar.

Jorge Valtierra (Taking advantage of the excuse to relieve the strained situation).— Then . . . (Turns to the chair at the back to pick up his hat, ready to leave.)

Águeda (Raising her eyes from the book).—Jorge . . . That flower?

Jorge Valtierra (Somewhat disturbed).—What did you say?

Águeda.—(Without moving).—That flower . . . to keep the place . . . Where is it?

Jorge Valtierra (Searching).—Here, I think. (JORGE comes to the front of the stage and without speaking gives the same flower to ÁGUEDA. JORGE, ready to leave, carries his hat in his hand and has thrown the kodak strap over his shoulder.

Águeda (Taking the flower, which she places in the book before laying it down).—Thank you. And I tell you all your efforts are vain. Put up those traps. You will take tea with us. I shall not let you go. (Turns half-way around without waiting for JORGE to reply and starts towards the stairway.)

Jorge Valtierra.—I can't today, Águeda; I can't. I have just told *Lolín* . . .

Lolín (With a certain gravity in her tone, her voice slightly altered).—You are taking the wrong tack if you expect my complicity. I'll not let you go either.

Jorge Valtierra.—But today . . .

Lolín.—Today, by no means. And it is not a whim. I'll give you my reason. I am going to leave you today for a long time. For a year, perhaps.

Águeda (With interest, turning back from the stairway, says simultaneously with JORGE).—What?

Jorge Valtierra.—What?

Lolín.—And who knows . . . So many things can happen in a year!

Águeda.—But are we going so soon?

Lolín.—I, tomorrow.

Águeda.—You!

Lolín.—As she does every year, Aunt Constanza, my mother's sister, insists that I spend the month with her. And as she is in poor health, and as I am so well these days, it seemed to me right to please her.

Águeda.—You haven't said anything to me about it.

Lolín.—Not to trouble you. (*Turning to JORGE.*) So it would leave a bad impression on me for us to say good-bye in such a hurry after all these months of friendship. Do you prefer we put it off till later?

Jorge Valtierra.—I should put it off forever, if it depended on me.

Lolín.—Thank you, Jorge.

Jorge Valtierra.—Till later then.

Salazar (*Coming in, running against JORGE at the door.*)—Are you leaving, Valtierra?

Jorge Valtierra.—I shall be back at five.

Salazar.—Good-bye till then.

Águeda.—Salazar! Did you know Lolín was going tomorrow?

Lolín (*Answering first*).—Yes.

Salazar.—For several days.

Águeda (*Seeing that LOLÍN is going stolidly towards the stairway.*)—Where are you going?

Lolín.—Such a confusion as I have in my room! . . . Books, papers, clothes, medicine . . . It scares me to see all I need to go on living. What is a person to do? Call me when Jorge comes back. I'll be upstairs packing. I am going very early tomorrow, about daylight.

Águeda.—Do you want me to help you?

Lolín (*After a pause, coming back down the stairs.*)—I want to ask a favor of you.

Águeda.—It is granted, so ask it.

Salazar.—Do I disturb you?

Lolín.—Oh, no, Salazar! (*To ÁGUEDA.*) Nurse Concha . . . I should like to have you let Nurse Concha go with me for a week. She will look after me on the journey and I shall not find the first days in a strange house quite so lonely. Now, you see how selfish I am. Is it granted?

Águeda.—Of course. And it wasn't worth while . . .

Lolín.—The poor woman. She has always loved me so! Thank you. I am sorry to take her away from you for these days. (*Throwing her arms around ÁGUEDA's neck rather brusquely.*) I thank you so much, so much!

Águeda.—Lolín!

Lolín (*Releasing her also brusquely, and from the stairway.*)
—Good-bye.

Águeda (*Remains a moment at the foot of the stairway, gazing upward after LOLÍN has disappeared. Then, smiling, turns to look at SALAZAR.*) She is better!

Salazar.—She seems so.

Águeda.—She embraced me with such strength . . . She went bounding up the stairs. She takes part in everything. Thinks of everything, takes care of herself, looks after her own things, makes her own plans. She doesn't seem the same girl.

Salazar.—No.

Águeda (*As if wishing to convince herself.*)—How glad I am!

Salazar.—You are?

Águeda (*Aggressively.*)—Does it displease you?

Salazar.—Why should it?

Águeda.—Not very long ago, in this same room, you announced to me such horrible things! But I don't pay any attention to warnings, nor prophecies. (*She has seated herself in her usual arm chair and glances sidewise at SALAZAR, with an evident desire to get him to talk. SALAZAR seems determined to maintain his reserve.*) They seem to me a lack of submission to divine will.

Salazar.—They do?

Águeda (*Cleverly, knowing she is provoking him.*)—For if we try to anticipate everything in life with advice and reasons, what would we leave to God?

Salazar.—The recompense. Does that seem to you little? Anyway, you have spoken truly. God disposes of life, but not of yours only.

Águeda.—Of course not.

Salazar.—But of everyone's. In this case of Lolín's and of yours, too. (*ÁGUEDA, in her chair, taking the hand that JORGE has kissed, seems pleasantly lost in thought. SALAZAR keeps silent, after saying these words and she says:*)

Águeda.—Go on.

Salazar.—What for?

Águeda (*Seizing, all of a sudden, the situation*).—At least to show me that I continue to count as a living person in this house. For some days you have all left me alone, abandoned me. I see around me only the expression of amazement. Will you tell me what is happening? I have no contagious disease. Those who have always lived in the house with me can keep on doing so. I am not mad; it isn't waste of time to speak a word to me; you may all talk to me still.

Salazar.—We?

Águeda.—My father, Lolín, you . . .

Salazar.—Not Jorge?

Águeda.—Jorge has not abandoned me.

Salazar.—Well then? . . .

Águeda.—Nor Lolín either. You have just seen. She has just shown you. I can't be so wicked.

Salazar.—Who accuses you?

Águeda.—My father. And don't you deny it, for there is no doubt of it. It seems as if a curse has fallen on "Los Rosales." He hardly ever stays in the house. And I know he hasn't any patients in the town. He takes walks through the beeches and the oaks. He frowns at me and looks sad. Tears came to his eyes yesterday when he went out. And I must talk with him, but I am afraid. Salazar, if you wanted to, you could help me so much!

Salazar.—I?

Águeda.—Papa has always set such store by your advice, Salazar. (*Very feminine; her voice flattering and soft, her look tender and pleading, like that of a woman who is trying to get someone to help her, and in this case, an accomplice. A pause. SALAZAR, approaching the table, beside which ÁGUEDA is sitting.*)

Salazar.—Tell me.

Águeda (*Breathing more freely already*).—Do you remember our conversation one morning in this same place? Things have happened since then.

Salazar.—We were talking that day of the two voices that sounded in the depths of your conscience. Has one of them become silent?

Águeda.—No.

Salazar.—Well then? . . .

Águeda.—One of them is shouting.

Salazar.—The more noble one?

Águeda.—At any rate, the stronger.

Salazar (*Taking up the very book ÁGUEDA has been reading*).—

—Of course. And do you heed it?

Águeda.—Not yet. (*SALAZAR opens the book, the flower falls on the floor. AGUEDA is startled, and utters a low cry.*)

Salazar (*Taking the flower; significantly*).—Lolín's?

Águeda.—Mine.

Salazar.—Then you have heeded it. This is a fact. Truly the voice must be a strong one.

Águeda.—And a good one, Salazar. Lolín herself embraced me with no malice. You saw her. I have struggled as hard as I could to resist. But this is happiness and I have no more strength.

Salazar (*With a pained voice that he can not control*).—
Águeda.

Águeda.—And do you not approve, either?

Salazar (*Master of himself; somewhat dryly*).—You tell me you have struggled. Why, Águeda?

Águeda.—I kept remembering your words of that day. I was afraid of causing pain.

Salazar (*Thinking to himself*).—No!

Águeda (*Quickly*).—Isn't it true? Lolín seems to have come to life again. Life has such surprises.

Salazar (*Sad, looking at her*).—Yes.

Águeda.—I know that egoism never counsels one to intervene in such matters and your egoism seemed reasonable to me, Salazar. You have a great respect for my father. But if you do not help me . . . I haven't the strength to face him either. I shall be silent. I shall be unhappy.

Salazar.—Oh, no!

Águeda.—Until Lolín forgets entirely, I shall wait. Of course, I am used to wearing over my bosom the plain hospital apron. Habit has made it a sort of a mold for my feelings. Only grant that beneath this cloth a heart beats. My patients will be better off for it! I put into my work an ardor I never put there before. As if all my acts were now a manner of loving.

Salazar.—Águeda, answer my questions and do not be surprised at them. I wish to be sure of your feelings. Your life has been somewhat peculiar. At your father's side in the austere atmosphere of the hospital in Madrid, with no other vista of the world than its pains and its illnesses, with no

other friendships than mine, not very attractive and sometimes aggressive, you were but little prepared for a life of sentiment.

Águeda.—And for that very reason the invasion has been rapid and has swept everything before it. As if in a moment a thousand atoms of my being that were dead, or sleeping, began to vibrate, all at once, with a longing, a desire to make up lost time, with a joy of living!

Salazar.—All this has been too brusque and you speak of it with a certain exaltation. It may be love itself and it may be . . . open your eyes to this life . . . , an hallucination of your feelings. If so, you would run the risk of taking a false step and it would be terrible for you. Consider it carefully.

Águeda.—I have considered it. I have *felt* it especially. I am sure.

Salazar.—The feelings are always obscure. You have felt it, but have you thought about it, too? (*ÁGUEDA assents with her head.*) Then the moment has come to pronounce a name. For we have not yet done so. (*Uttering the words slowly; putting into them a kind of eagerness.*) Do you love Jorge Valtierra with all your heart, for life and death?

Águeda (*A pause, giving a certain solemnity to the moment.*).—Yes.

Salazar.—Pardon the courtesy of this insistence. But I wished to know it once for all. You and I shall never speak of this again. I beg you.

Águeda.—I feared it. You do not approve either. You all leave me alone.

Salazar.—No, not alone. But let's not talk of it.

Águeda (*With a tone of supreme anguish.*).—And if I should need help, Salazar?

Salazar.—You and Jorge Valtierra will have me at your side.

Águeda (*Effusively*).—Thank you. You are able to do good to others. You are happy.

Salazar.—Let's not talk of me. (*Approaches her.*) Yes, let's talk of me, just once. (*Seizing ÁGUEDA's hand and caressing it in a friendly manner, perfectly composed.*) My friend, if you would not take it as a piece of advice, you who detest advice, I should tell you the secret of my . . . happiness.

Águeda.—Do you know it?

Salazar.—Yes, and it is this: “Happiness consists in never being afraid . . . to suffer.”

Águeda.—Well, I am beginning to suffer at times.

Salazar.—Which means that you are beginning to be happy. Good-bye, Águeda. (*They separate.* SALAZAR starts to go to his room. *The doctor enters by the small door at the back; before closing it he calls SALAZAR.*)

Papa Gaspar.—Salazar! (SALAZAR stops.)

Águeda (To SALAZAR, while the doctor places his hat and surgical case on the table in the office.) Papa; stay. (SALAZAR, after a slight hesitation, remains on the stage.)

Papa Gaspar (Slapping SALAZAR on the shoulder).—You keep yourself hidden, Seneca; I never see you any more. I am so glad to set eyes on you at last!

Salazar.—Old tactics! You anticipate an attack by making one yourself. You are the one that is hiding. I have the pleasure to offer you this corner of “*Los Rosales*,” where life is not so unbearable. Here we do not eat up grouchy doctors and there are friends always ready to take the opposite side in metaphysical arguments.

Papa Gaspar (With a sad homesickness).—Yes. You are right. Never in the house. I, who was so satisfied with “*Los Rosales*!” I don’t know, I don’t know; I am becoming intractable again. Have you swallowed a lot of books since yesterday?

Salazar.—Very few, very few. Scarcely a few lines. I haven’t done anything.

Papa Gaspar (Coming into the room; to his daughter, without embracing her, and all through the scene as if avoiding looking her in the face.) And you, nurse? They tell me you are taking my place with good success.

Águeda.—Oh, mercy no!

Papa Gaspar.—It’s all right, all right. Keep on doing it. They told me about it in the town. Blas’ boy, wasn’t it?

Águeda.—Yes.

Papa Gaspar.—Did you help her, Salazar?

Águeda.—Nurse Concha helped me.

Papa Gaspar (After a pause).—And Lolín?

Águeda.—Upstairs.

Papa Gaspar.—In her room?

Salazar.—Yes, in her room.

Papa Gaspar.—And Jorge is in town. I just saw him. I don't understand them.

Salazar.—Valtierra is coming presently. He is going to take tea with us. Águeda and Lolín invited him.

Papa Gaspar.—Very well; that's not so bad.

Salazar.—And he was just here at “*Los Rosales*.”

Papa Gaspar.—Of course. (*His looks involuntarily turn towards the stairway. There is a pause. The doctor, facing SALAZAR, asks:*) Did she mention her journey?

Salazar.—Who?

Papa Gaspar.—Lolín.

Salazar.—Yes. She was just talking to me about it a moment ago.

Papa Gaspar.—But what for? What is happening? (*SALAZAR starts to reply. ÁGUEDA has slipped to the back of stage near the side door by which she starts to go out. The doctor notices her and says brusquely:*) Daughter!

Águeda (Startled).—Papa.

Papa Gaspar.—Are you in a hurry?

Águeda.—I was going to look after the tea and see that they arrange it on the terrace as yesterday. Everyone liked it there.

Papa Gaspar.—Shall we talk straight to the point? For days in this house we have been looking after everything except the things that need looking after most.

Águeda.—Papa.

Salazar.—Doctor.

Papa Gaspar.—Now it is said. If instead of going out of that door, you had turned the other way to look after those who suffer and are alone, I shouldn't have said a word. You understand me, do you not? Go now.

Águeda.—Yes, Papa. (*ÁGUEDA hesitates a moment. SALAZAR has reached the rear door at the right, opens it and says:*)

Salazar.—Águeda. (*The simple movement of SALAZAR and her name which he pronounces, are sufficient to strengthen the resolution of ÁGUEDA, who, feeling herself supported, goes out at the side door as she at first intended. The doctor, crossing his arms, disconcerted, faces his friend.*)

Papa Gaspar.—So, indirectly, but in my very face, you dare foment insurrection in my house. What sort of philosophy is that, Logician?

Salazar.—Yours, Master. To look after those who suffer and are alone. Were not those your words?

Papa Gaspar.—Be careful; let us not mix up the question at the start. Let us know how and of what you are talking.

Salazar.—That is the method of Socrates.

Papa Gaspar.—I am not going to keep still on that account. You can give me lessons in philosophy and ethics that way in words. But when it comes to actually doing good without needing any reason for doing it and against my own feelings, no one can outdo me. Do you understand? Well, (*Pointing to the stairway*) that girl is dying without any help for it.

Salazar.—Doctor!

Papa Gaspar.—Without any help for it! Do you comprehend all that means to me? The work of years. And a work so full of life, so palpitating, with a mouth so smiling, a heart so thankful! Poor girl!

Salazar.—Be calm, doctor.

Papa Gaspar.—You know that vanity was never one of my sins. Recognition by Academies and Congresses, titles and consultations—bah! what do they all amount to? But when she called me innocently “Papa Gaspar,” Papa Gaspar! Why I felt so proud. It was a real honor! And it is all ended. Sympathize with me, Logician!

Salazar.—Yes, doctor. You are swayed by your feelings. I do sympathize with you.

Papa Gaspar.—I am old now. All the stimulations of life gone, there remained to me one illusion. I have one daughter of my own, another, a daughter of my science; I hoped to die kissing their joined hands with the same kiss, and now it will not be. What has happened here?

Salazar.—Doctor Ayezcuá, since it has affected your heart you must know what has happened. I am the one to ask.

Papa Gaspar.—Very well. Come nearer. I don’t want them to hear us. I will tell it. (*They settle themselves. The confidence begins in a low tone. Both, in the ensuing discussion, raising their voices, until at the end they are almost shouting.*) A few moments before Valtierra came to this house the morning of Lolín’s collapse—you remember?—she had confessed the truth to me. I had inferred it—and I was very well pleased. It had been a spontaneous attraction; just a

natural occurrence. She and Valtierra loved each other. An idyll. But, at the same time, a symptom. For me, most of all, a symptom. Lolín's anemia was yielding at last. That weak, chlorotic organism, susceptible to all germs hostile to life, was approaching a crisis, was reacting, was being controlled in a perfect and natural manner. It was blooming, therefore, there was sap. Lolín was being saved.

Salazar.—She was being saved.

Papa Gaspar.—And how? The cure was within our reach, and I was only anxious to hasten it. Nothing morbid in her affection; marriage possible, a healthy life in the country, in the open air, and future maternity bringing in its time a complete cure. Do you understand my joy?

Salazar.—Yes, doctor.

Papa Gaspar.—Then here it stops. The idyll had no second chapter. If the attraction of Jorge was temporary, for Lolín it will be mortal. The anemia comes back. If the attacks are repeated—and in her condition of mind it is probable—her heart will give way. A lesion will occur and then death very shortly. Days, months, at most. Well, under such circumstances to feel the danger and not to know a remedy is painful, to know the remedy and not apply it, a crime!

Salazar.—Doctor!

Papa Gaspar.—A crime!

Salazar.—In the first place, you may be mistaken. Lolín seems more animated, stronger, more gay recently. She is better.

Papa Gaspar.—It is false. What there is, is a stubborn determination to sacrifice that stimulates her being and gives her an appearance of health.

Salazar.—But she herself always maintains that she feels well.

Papa Gaspar.—She is deceiving you.

Salazar.—And the color on her cheeks and her lips?

Papa Gaspar.—Fever! And you know it as well as I. It is perfectly apparent. It is useless for you to pretend what you do not believe. The problem is the one I have laid down: shall I intervene to remedy things as I can do, or shall I fold my arms in the face of certain danger?

Salazar.—Can you intervene?

Papa Gaspar.—There is no doubt of it.

Salazar.—By what right?

Papa Gaspar.—Forty years of struggle with death, with never a moment of rest, and ten years of endeavor to snatch this child from its claws, give me the right!

Salazar.—Is it a question of her alone?

Papa Gaspar.—A ray of hope; a word from Jorge, a smile, you see that this is easy, and we shall drive away the danger. The rest will be arranged afterwards.

Salazar.—Then it is a question of Jorge.

Papa Gaspar.—No, not of him either.

Salazar.—No?

Papa Gaspar.—It is a question of Águeda.

Salazar.—Of Águeda?

Papa Gaspar.—Yes, of her. And I do not deny it. I do not accuse her . . . My poor child! She does not realize the harm she is doing. But I shall speak.

Salazar.—You will not speak!

Papa Gaspar.—Sophist!

Salazar.—Philosopher, if you please!

Papa Gaspar.—I am her father.

Salazar.—God is God, and with all his power he does not go so far. He gives us a being free to do good or evil and does not interfere until it is done.

Papa Gaspar.—But have I not told you, Salazar, do you not know, that where I see a danger, forty years of my life compel me to interfere?

Salazar.—In this case, no.

Papa Gaspar.—Why not? You give no reason?

Salazar.—One is enough. If your daughter were dying, doctor; if it were necessary, God forbid, for you to proceed with a bistoury to open the flesh of your flesh to remove the evil . . . imagine the greatest possible danger and the most peremptory need of a cure . . .

Papa Gaspar.—Yes, I am following you.

Salazar.—Tell me frankly: would you act with your hand weak, trembling, feeble from emotion, or would you seek the skillful, steady, cold and mechanical hand of a good colleague?

Papa Gaspar.—I need not answer! But besides the cool hand in this case . . .

Salazar.—Destiny! Which is more than cold, doctor, which is implacable!

Papd Gaspar.—And blind! I challenge your argument. What is the matter with you today? I do not know you, Salazar! (*They look at each other; SALAZAR lowers his head. The doctor has a suspicion which is to be seen in his words, and in a tone of intense and tender pity, he continues:*) Yes, I do know you. What do your years of silence matter to me? I do know you. But you have not done well to keep silent.

Salazar.—Doctor!

Papa Gaspar.—No, you have not done well! This time your hope and mine was the same.

Salazar.—Not Águeda's.

Papa Gaspar.—Who knows! I would open my arms to you with all my heart.

Salazar.—If I remembered my own feelings to let them influence me, I should commit an infamy.

Papa Gaspar.—Very well, but let me act alone!

Salazar.—No, doctor!

Papa Gaspar.—Will you agree I am right and make up your mind to help me?

Salazar.—You are not right and I wish to convince you.

Papa Gaspar.—To convince me? It is a question of the life of this poor child.

Salazar.—It is a question of your daughter's happiness.

Papa Gaspar.—I know that Valtierra is not her happiness. She blinds him, attracts him, dominates him physically, if you please, but Valtierra is really in love with Lolín. All that is human.

Salazar.—As for Jorge; as for her . . .

Papa Gaspar.—A passion of two months can not be deep.

Salazar.—Passions are not measured by their depth, but by their violence, doctor. They are a force.

Papa Gaspar.—That another force may overcome.

Salazar.—If it becomes responsible for the result, yes.

Papa Gaspar.—Just so. I will be responsible. So far, I have always been. Between two dangers, equally great, I would always—always!—without distinction as to whether they are my own or others, hasten to the most immediate one. Well, in this case, the most immediate one is hers! (*Points towards the stairway, to LOLÍN'S room.*)

Salazar.—Why so?

Papa Gaspar.—Because death has gripped her heart.

Salazar.—And it is within an arm's length of Águeda. Even the heart may last a while.

Papa Gaspar.—But is she really blind?

Salazar.—Perhaps she is! Tell her that her happiness is impossible, that there are circumstances in which love is a matter of life and death, and that is enough for a passionate and wilful girl.

Papa Gaspar.—Then . . .

Salazar.—You wish to save a heart. That is your right. Does your science not give you medicines and drugs for such a case?

Papa Gaspar.—Nonsense!

Salazar.—Is it necessary to coerce a soul? For the sort of transfusion of happiness of which you have been dreaming, you will have to use coercion on the feelings of your daughter. You can not. It is not medicine. You do not know whether you are going; the anatomy of souls is a secret of God; you can not become responsible for the result. Or if you can, the operation, Doctor Ayezcuá, is very simple: call your daughter, win the confidence of her heart, hear from her lips the naïve confession of her love, strong and vital, as if it were her whole being, and compel her yourself. (*There is a pause. SALAZAR has won the argument completely. The doctor, undone, and filled with indecision and grief, falls back in his chair.*)

Papa Gaspar.—No, I can not! But then . . . (*Almost sobbing, his elbows on the table and his head in his hands.*) Oh, my daughter!

Salazar (*Approaching him, much moved*).—Doctor . . .

Papa Gaspar.—Logician! If you were trying to press my heart between your hands to the point of expelling from it every bit of courage, to the point of making it a mass of weakness and cowardice, you have succeeded. But then, Salazar, is there no help for the child?

Salazar.—No one knows . . .

Papa Gaspar.—Yes, I know . . . it is death . . .

Salazar.—Doctor.

Papa Gaspar.—She will die. I see it. I accept it. Do you want me to accept it, Salazar? But it is a crime!

Salazar.—That is for God to say!

Papa Gaspar.—It is a crime, it is a crime! (*ÁGUEDA, entering, stops surprised at hearing the last words; with a sud-*

den impulse she embraces the doctor, putting her hand over his mouth.)

Águeda.—No, Papa, for heaven's sake, don't say that!

Salazar.—Águeda. (*Wishing to restrain her.*)

Papa Gaspar.—Daughter!

Águeda.—Papa!

Papa Gaspar.—Why didn't you speak? In its time, the remedy was possible. Tell me, why didn't you speak?

Águeda.—Forgive me, and may she, too, forgive me. Ask her if she will not.

Papa Gaspar.—No, I shall say nothing.

Águeda.—Bring her to me. She wants to leave. And, you see, away from you, she would die, wouldn't she? I didn't know . . . and now I do . . . bring her to me . . . I want to tell her . . .

Papa Gaspar.—Calm yourself!

Águeda.—So she will not know . . . yes . . . I am . . . (*Obeying an irresistible plea of his daughter, who without words calls for LOLÍN, the doctor goes up the stairway.*)

Salazar.—Águeda . . . think . . . Your happiness is a right no one can dispute. Why, I have already said so. You and Jorge will have me at your side.

Águeda.—Thank you, Salazar. I shall do what I can. (*JORGE VALTIERRA enters at the back. She, with an outcry:*) Jorge!

Jorge Valtierra (*Seeing her so moved and upset.*).—Águeda, what has happened? For heaven's sake, tell me. What has happened? Tell me!

Águeda (*Pauses. Her eyes are fixed with an almost ecstatic rapture on those of Jorge; showing him passionately the flower in her hand, she says:*). The last . . . do you see? (*JORGE lowers his head.*) Jorge . . . before, when you gave it to me, did you do it with your whole heart?

Jorge Valtierra.—Yes, then.

Águeda (*Mistress of the situation from this moment.*).—Enough. Thank you. Señor Valtierra, do you know that Doctor Ayezcuá has the sad reputation of rarely failing in his diagnoses?

Jorge Valtierra.—Yes.

Águeda.—Well, Doctor Ayezcuá thinks that if Lolín goes away tomorrow, giving up forever . . . “*Los Rosales*,” she will die. And you don't want her to die, do you?

Jorge Valtierra (Solemnly after a pause, rising above the stress of the moment).—No.

Águeda (To drown her own emotions, shouts:).—Papa! . . . Lolín! (And then dryly.) Jorge, it rests absolutely with you to see that Lolín does not go away. You owe it to her.

Jorge Valtierra.—Águeda . . .

Águeda.—And you owe it to me . . . Papa! Lolín! (As both appear on the stairs, ÁGUEDA, with an irresistible impulse, rushes to meet them. The doctor, behind LOLÍN carries his hand to his heart, imposing calmness on his daughter.) Lolín!

Lolín.—What has happened to you? You all seem disturbed!

Águeda.—No, no indeed! And it is strange we are not, since you have hurt us all. You were going away for good, you ungrateful one. (LOLÍN wishes to protest.) Yes, don't deny it. I know. Well, now you are not going.

Lolín.—What?

Águeda.—Now you are not going away. I am sure of it.

Lolín.—Now I am not. And why not?

Águeda.—Tell her, Papa . . . No, Jorge, you tell her why she is not going.

Lolín (Unable to control herself).—Jorge!

Águeda.—Yes, yes, go and be happy. Be happy, both of you! (She leads LOLÍN to JORGE'S side. Both, with PAPA GASPAR form a group at the back. ÁGUEDA feels a sob rising in her throat. As she turns, she sees SALAZAR.) Is it all right, Salazar?

Salazar.—It is all right, Águeda. (The unhappy girl sinks down, overcome, sobbing. SALAZAR hastens to her side.)

Curtain

ACT III

The same scene. It is the end of September. A cloudy day, almost wintry. On the table, the breakfast service, which a maid is removing and NURSE CONCHA is about to help her.

DON GASPAR stands by the door at the back and is awaiting

a reply from NURSE CONCHA. *The latter has opened the door of SALAZAR'S room and, after looking in, says:*

Nurse Concha.—No, doctor, he hasn't come back. There is no one here.

Papa Gaspar.—I wonder if he is still in the town.

Nurse Conchz.—Saying his good-byes, probably. He is leaving today.

Papa Gaspar.—It is late. How obstinate Salazar is!

Nurse Concha.—I thought he would change his plans in view of what you decided a while ago.

Papa Gaspar.—I didn't decide anything.

Nurse Concha.—Well, Águeda did. As you always go together every year, it wouldn't hurt him to put off his going until tomorrow.

Papa Gaspar.—Well, he neither can nor will put it off . . . Doesn't it seem right to you? (*At this moment the maid leaves by the side door at the right and doesn't return.* NURSE CONCHA remains, finishing arranging the table, and her conversation with the doctor becomes more intimate.)

Nurse Concha (Deliberately).—I should say you are the one dissatisfied.

Papa Gaspar.—What irritates me is that he should spend his very last day out of the house. And it is the weather that keeps him there. (*Looking through the window.*) The sun hasn't come out yet.

Nurse Concha (Who finishes arranging the table).—Perhaps it will clear up by noon. But this is a crazy September.

Papa Gaspar.—Yes.

Nurse Concha.—It seems like winter . . . Shall I stir up the fire?

Papa Gaspar.—It wouldn't do any harm, I think. (NURSE CONCHA turns to the fireplace and stirs up the coals during the dialogue.)

Nurse Concha.—You see my Águeda was right in arranging matters as she did.

Papa Gaspar.—But one doesn't decide on a journey, in a minute, as we have just done, while we were eating our breakfast.

Nurse Concha.—Not later than the day before yesterday you told me you ought to go today, with Salazar . . .

Papa Gaspar.—Just a remark. There is no great hurry.

Nurse Concha.—No? . . . A year ago, just such a day as today, we arrived in Madrid on our return from “*Los Rosales*.” There you see.

Papa Gaspar.—A year ago circumstances were different. This year a lot of things have to be thought of and we have to take time for it.

Nurse Concha.—Well, my son, talk first. But as we have spent about two weeks with never a word—for we are all just like Trappists in this house, though this morning it seems the ice was broken—there is a lot to say yet.

Papa Gaspar.—I have to say good-bye to my patients in the town.

Nurse Concha.—Why don’t you go then?

Papa Gaspar.—And Lolín? Pretty soon I’ll have to go with her for her morning walk . . .

Nurse Concha (*To the fire, which has just caught*).—There you are! (*To the doctor, who stops, looking at the flames without saying a word*.) Shall I get out your overcoat?

Papa Gaspar.—What for?

Nurse Concha.—For this morning walk, if you please, doctor. Neither the weather nor your age will warrant your exposing yourself at this altitude.

Papa Gaspar (*In a bad mood, sitting down and warming his hands by the fire*).—I don’t need an overcoat at nine in the morning and in September.

Nurse Concha.—You will need it tomorrow at daylight, when you pass the harbor shivering, as every year. For you leave at six, doctor.

Papa Gaspar.—We shall see.

Nurse Concha.—What shall I do?

Papa Gaspar.—As you wish.

Nurse Concha.—I shall get out the coat. (*ÁGUEDA appears on the stairway with some books in her hand. A stamp of melancholy is seen on her face, somewhat pale. Her voice dead and disconsolate*.)

Águeda.—These books, Nurse, in my satchel, too. (*NURSE CONCHA takes the books*.) Is it packed?

Nurse Concha.—Almost.

Águeda.—And the rest? . . .

Nurse Concha.—Entirely. You could leave this afternoon if you insisted.

Águeda.—Would that I might! (*NURSE CONCHA, with*

the books, turns towards the center table on which are scattered some sprigs of lavender.)

Nurse Concha.—No . . . No, you couldn't, now that I remember. There are lacking the little bunches of lavender we put in every year.

Águeda.—That would be an obstacle!

Nurse Concha (*Somewhat vexed*).—You never wanted to go any year without your lavender for the linen. So . . .

Águeda (*Not caring to talk*).—All right, Nurse, it is all the same. (*She throws herself in the arm-chair, her head leaning back and her eyes intently fixed on space.* NURSE CONCHA and the doctor watch her, sad as before. NURSE CONCHA turns to the doctor.)

Papa Gaspar.—And my overcoat?

Nurse Concha.—I'll get it right away.

Papa Gaspar.—All right. (NURSE CONCHA goes out at the rear side door to the right. The doctor and ÁGUEDA are silent a moment. DON GASPAR slowly approaches his daughter, caresses her affectionately, passing his hand over her head and says:) Daughter!

Águeda (*With a slight start on hearing his voice, as if coming back from a dream*).—Papa! . . .

Papa Gaspar.—What is the matter?

Águeda (*Looks into his eyes a moment fixedly before replying; then, smiling with profound sadness*).—Nothing. (The doctor doesn't insist. Turns away again; takes a few steps; approaches the door at the back; looks out a moment, and resumes the deep melancholy of his short contemplation, saying:)

Papa Gaspar.—What a day!

Águeda.—Are you going out, Papa?

Papa Gaspar.—Yes.

Águeda.—Because I came in? Does it worry you to see me this way? Do I bother you, too?

Papa Gaspar (*With all his heart, hastening to her*).—Águeda!

Águeda.—And don't you imagine I want to leave? Yes, the sooner the better, the sooner the better! Tomorrow, today, if there is still time! This very day! . . . Please . . . I can't stand any more.

Papa Gaspar.—If you make up your mind to talk as God wills and you have confidence in me—and you may have—let's go slowly, let's talk. And in the first place, no ingrati-

tude . . . no unjust, hard words, for no one here deserves them, nor do I either.

Águeda.—Unjust words?

Papa Gaspar.—And hard, yes. You spoke some a moment ago. Answer me; when and whom do you bother?

Águeda.—Always and everyone! For some days past, yes, Papa. Always and everyone! In spite of myself, without intending to, of course, but I notice it. Don't deny it; you know it is so and it is natural!

Papa Gaspar.—But I do deny it!

Águeda.—The first step taken, it was wrong to continue here. Hasn't my duty been done? Well, now, what are we waiting for? It wasn't my happiness we were seeking.

Papa Gaspar.—And are you sorry for it?

Águeda.—On the contrary! I am pleased to have done it. For, after all, this suffering has been a relief. It is all over now . . . for me. In the beginning, I thought I should die. But I didn't. I go on living. But let me get away from here. I believe it is the others who will not let me forget, they remember too well . . . and they hurt me.

Papa Gaspar.—*Águeda!*

Águeda.—Yes, Papa! And that, too, in spite of the efforts of Lolín and the discretion of Jorge, . . . of your conciliatory comings and goings, accompanying me in my solitude and hiding from me their interviews. No. What is the use, Papa? All this is false, childish, hateful. Let us go away from here. This house is crushing me!

Papa Gaspar.—You are mistaken.

Águeda.—Papa, listen . . . I have kept still so long that I can do so no longer. If things have followed their natural course, why hide it? Jorge comes to "*Los Rosales*" every morning. I have never seen him. Why not? You have arranged with Lolín this hygienic walk through the park, you three . . . Do you think I have been strong enough to keep from following you from a distance, from being so weak as to watch you from my room, through the window? And I have seen you three! . . . And I have suffered! Alone, exiled from that little world of happiness to which the rest had a right. Do you wish me to tell you the truth? It has been unjust.

Papa Gaspar.—Perhaps, yes, but wait . . .

Águeda.—One morning, Salazar, who was coming out of his room, surprised me watching you, right here, from this window. I didn't know what to say. I must have been dreadfully pale . . . Salazar opened the door, he offered me his arm; and said to me: "Come, it is necessary for them to understand that you have a right to be there." Do you see, Papa? . . . I didn't want to do it. I feared I would displease you, have a bad effect on Lolín. But those words did me so much good! . . . Salazar showed me some recognition. I felt myself a little bit worthy of living.

Papa Gaspar.—Salazar could speak that way because he is a man accustomed to act resolutely in this life; but Lolín, almost a child, sick, weak; Lolín, for whom the affection of others has never had any other form than that of compassion and petting, . . . Do you think we should proceed in the same way? I can hear her yet: . . . "Don't let Águeda know, don't let Águeda see; it hurts me to be happy when she is suffering . . . No, no, don't let her know, don't let her see!" And her timidity seemed in those moments as worthy of respect at least, as your generosity. There was at the bottom, the same tenderness . . . My child, was it so easy to decide?

Águeda.—Papa . . . Why have you not talked this way during these days? I have been so alone!

Papa Gaspar.—It is not the case. The tears you shed burned my very skin. But all my life I have been the same way; you know it. As if I did not hear the groans and complaints of those who were suffering. I tortured them in order to cure them; they accuse me of cruelty because I do not listen, and in the end these groans and these complaints that I have not heeded have made me grow old before my time . . . It is hard, it is hard. (*ÁGUEDA looks at her father who makes efforts not to appear moved. She herself, in the crisis of a supreme emotion, approaches him, caresses with her left hand the venerable head of the old man and with her right carries his hand devoutly to her lips.*)

Águeda.—Papa! . . . Forgive me, Papa! (*A pause. The father, with an effort to calm himself, kisses ÁGUEDA on the forehead and, trying to get back to a natural tone, says:*)

Papa Gaspar.—Well . . . it's all over . . . And now it is forgotten . . . We doctors are not only familiar with caustics, we are acquainted with balms, too, Águeda,

my daughter, look around you. Do not complain that we hid joys from you. There will be none as long as your eyes show a desire to weep.

Águeda.—Thank you, Papa. (*And both now, at last, embrace each other. In a moment, NURSE CONCHA comes down the stairway. She carries the doctor's overcoat and hat. Without raising her voice, says:*)

Nurse Concha.—Doctor . . .

Papa Gaspar (Controlling himself. He and ÁGUEDA move apart).—Thank you, Nurse. Lay them down.

Nurse Concha (With slight restraint as if annoyed at having surprised them).—And Lolín says if you are waiting for her, she will come down right away, for it is the usual hour.

Papa Gaspar.—All right. (*NURSE CONCHA goes out hurriedly, without making a noise, as if wishing them not to notice her. The doctor turns to look at his daughter again significantly.) If you wish, we will not go out.*

Águeda.—Yes, do. But first I shall talk with Lolín.

Papa Gaspar.—Well!

Águeda.—I do not wish her to wait for my happiness in order to be happy. Perhaps she would never be! . . . (*LOLÍN comes down the stairs. In the attitude of the two women is apparent the wall of ice that, perhaps without their desiring it, has separated their hearts since the previous act. LOLÍN passes by ÁGUEDA without approaching to embrace her as was her custom.*)

Lolín.—Good morning, Águeda.

Águeda.—Good morning. (*LOLÍN walks on up to the doctor whose hand she kisses, saying:*)

Lolín.—Papa Gaspar . . . Has anything new happened? What is the matter?

Papa Gaspar.—Nothing. (*The doctor approaches the window at the back. LOLÍN turns to look at ÁGUEDA again, approaching her, but stopping short half-way in spite of herself, when ÁGUEDA looks at her.*) The day promises to clear. If we wait a little, the sun will come out.

Águeda (With a sigh).—Would that it might!

Papa Gaspar.—Lolín . . . Do you want us to wait?

Lolín.—Just whatever you wish.

Águeda (Approaching LOLÍN with an air of affectionate reproach).—But it vexes you . . . That is . . . stay here a moment and talk amicably in this large room,

as in other years on cloudy days . . . it vexes you now.

Lolín.—No, Águeda!

Águeda.—Yes, child . . . And yet nothing has happened. The door closed, as in other years, after the first of September, the rose without leaves or flowers . . . snow on the mountain, the sky cloudy . . . The only difference this little fire in the fireplace because we are getting old.

Papa Gaspar.—Because Concha insisted.

Águeda.—Very well, on that account . . . Anyway, I like it. It consoles me. (*Approaches the chimney and seats herself in an arm-chair beside it.*) So . . . as in other years. But we are not all here. Salazar is missing.

Papa Gaspar.—He has gone out. To say his farewells. He is leaving today.

Águeda.—Is he?

Papa Gaspar.—He decided some days ago.

Águeda.—But since we are going tomorrow . . . Every year we have gone together.

Lolín.—It is only three hours ago that you made up your minds.

Águeda.—There was plenty of time for him to put off his journey. It isn't kind of him. For tomorrow the parting will be sad. We alone, Papa!

Papa Gaspar.—Salazar told me he sent word to his mother by letter of his arrival. It seems there isn't time to write again. And the good lady would be very uneasy. She worships him.

Águeda.—Does she live so far away?

Papa Gaspar.—In one of those little out of the way towns of the Province of Avila, at the foot of the Gredos. A mail arrives every four days. And the telegraph is not to be thought of.

Águeda.—And Salazar is going to bury himself there?

Papa Gaspar.—All winter.

Lolín.—And is he resigned to that kind of exile?

Papa Gaspar.—He has his mother. What a kindly, active old lady she is! I saw her once and I shall always remember her. The two are, as it were, complements of each other . . . Besides the soil is a part of him. It belonged to his family long ago. One of his ancestors was a friend of Santa Teresa and the nun called him, "The Holy

Knight." One must spend, as I did, five or six days in that old stone house, which has stood for three centuries, in order to fully understand Salazar.

Lolín.—He never speaks of his mother. That is strange!

Águeda.—He never speaks of that which is nearest his heart.

Papa Gaspar.—That is true.

Águeda.—We shall go alone!

Lolín.—I could go with you as every year.

Águeda.—You?

Lolín.—I am quite well now. Although the mountain air may be good for me, I have been here five months now. Why should I prolong the stay?

Águeda.—Because it is right for you to stay, *Lolín*. Nurse Concha, who has always been so fond of you, will stay. You wrote to Doña Constanza, who is coming tomorrow, glad to spend a few weeks with her dear niece . . . Everyone here loves you. Well; if those who are here love you, you will do well to stay, *Lolín*. And besides, there is the question of your health, the most important thing, isn't it, *Papa*? . . . for it doesn't belong to you alone. Your health belongs to him. And this iron that they have begun to put into your veins, so sluggish before that they could hardly stand the strain, *Papa Gaspar* has put it there . . . *Papa Gaspar* and "*Los Rosales*" . . . You will do right to stay. In reality, I am the only one who doesn't know how to do right . . . (*Looks at her father, who is disturbed; hastens to him.*) Oh, yes, forgive me, *Papa*! I, too, know how. (*Half embraces him. To LOLÍN, speaking for the doctor.*) He denies it, but he can not stay here any longer. He is dying of homesickness. The other afternoon, he insisted that I had a fever. He misses his patients. And I do, too. Then we must go to them! To Madrid tomorrow! We two, alone, but both contented. And perhaps next summer there will be roses again at "*Los Rosales*." (*Turning to LOLÍN, much disturbed. The doctor, who hides his emotion, goes to the back.*) *Lolín*, are you going to miss me? (*Without speaking, after a pause, LOLÍN throws herself into ÁGUEDA's arms.*)

Lolín.—*Águeda!*

Águeda (*More and more calm, as LOLÍN's emotion increases.*)—*Lolín!* . . . Silly. (*To her father.*) Hasn't the sun come out?

Papa Gaspar.—It hasn't decided to yet.

Águeda.—Well, let's compel it to . . . if necessary.

Lolín.—Águeda, listen.

Águeda.—I don't want you to wait. (*Experiences a kind of fervent exaltation which ends in weeping.*) Here, Papa. (*Helps him to put on his overcoat.*)

Lolín.—I should like to tell you . . . I have to tell you . . .

Águeda (*Feigning displeasure*).—You don't have to tell me anything.

Lolín.—Águeda, no. You see it is very serious. I don't know myself how to begin, but I must . . . These last days, in fact, we have scarcely seen each other; we have never talked together. But today, after talking as we used to, after embracing each other as we always did . . . I don't know . . . it seems to me I am doing wrong; that there is something between us. I swear to you, if my happiness is at the expense of this breach between us, I prefer to suffer!

Águeda.—No, Lolín, dear; don't say that. There is nothing between us.

Lolín.—Yes, yes.

Águeda.—Nothing. Papa, tell Jorge de Valtierra that we are leaving tomorrow; that I should like to say good-bye to him and if he has no other engagement, ask him to lunch with us. (*Smiling to LOLÍN.*) Are you pleased?

Lolín.—Yes.

Águeda.—Was that it?

Lolín.—Yes. Do you harbor resentment towards him?

Águeda.—Yes.

Lolín.—You accuse him then?

Águeda.—Of the greatest wrong I have ever suffered: depriving me of your affection almost a month.

Lolín.—Thank you, Águeda, thank you. (*LOLÍN goes out. The doctor remains a moment behind, and says to ÁGUEDA:*)

Papa Gaspar.—You have caused her happiness. Can we do nothing for yours?

Águeda.—How should I know, Papa! (*The doctor goes out. A pause.*) Who does know! (*Takes a few steps, rings a bell, another silence; NURSE CONCHA appears.*) Another place at the table this morning. Señor Valtierra will lunch

with us. (*ÁGUEDA starts to leave by the side door at the right front, without speaking further.*)

Nurse Concha.—That's good!

Águeda (Now at the door, turning around and facing *NURSE CONCHA*, who is watching her in wonderment; assumes an air of dissimulation.) Has Salazar returned?

Nurse Concha (Affecting a most natural air).—He has not returned yet. (*ÁGUEDA goes out.* *NURSE CONCHA* approaches the table in the center, where the lavender is. In a few seconds, *SALAZAR* enters at the back. *NURSE CONCHA* looks at him slyly from time to time, and says at last:) So you are going without a doubt?

Salazar (Turning around, wondering).—Yes, going without a doubt. (*SALAZAR takes a few steps and, leaning against the chimney, stands in silence, watching the actions of NURSE CONCHA.* The latter continues:)

Nurse Concha.—Lavender. When my *Águeda* and the doctor went to Switzerland, a long time ago, to study for hospital work, the girl got her fondness for this plant. And she still has it. You see. They are made into little bunches . . . the little flowers folded in . . . so, and the stems covering them, tied up. They are very pretty.

Salazar (Taking a flower-covered sprig whose perfume he inhales with satisfaction).—My mother used to put lavender and apples in the linen chests. It smells like a winter morning.

Nurse Concha.—Like today.

Salazar.—Did Don Gaspar go out?

Nurse Concha.—As every day with *Lolín*. But *Águeda* is in the house. (*As the side door opens at this moment, NURSE CONCHA adds, leaving:*) Here she is. (*In fact, ÁGUEDA enters from the left side door.* *SALAZAR* following the gesture of *NURSE CONCHA*, turns to look at her. They remain facing each other. There is a moment of hesitation, but *ÁGUEDA*, calm, and affecting even greater calmness, says, with a smile:)

Águeda.—Can't you make any arrangement? You have decided definitely to leave us?

Salazar.—This afternoon.

Águeda.—So they have told me.

Salazar.—And I feel it deeply.

Águeda (Pretending to be shocked).—You feel it. That's the first time you have used that despicable verb. We are deteriorating.

Salazar (*Very grave, contrasting with the pretended lightness of ÁGUEDA*).—We are deteriorating. (*A pause.* Neither can decide to open a way for the conversation. ÁGUEDA, busying herself making bunches of lavender, asks:)

Águeda.—Do you know who is to lunch with us today?

Salazar (*In a natural manner*).—Valtierra?

Águeda.—Yes, Valtierra. Did they tell you?

Salazar.—No.

Águeda.—Then, how did you know? . . .

Salazar.—It is natural. You are leaving tomorrow.

Águeda.—And what of that?

Salazar.—Neither Doctor Ayecua, nor yourself, is capable of doing anything by halves. And this visit of Valtierra was inevitable today, at some time during the day, in order that you might finish your work, frankly, with an open heart. Add that your question showed me your eyes glowing with satisfaction, the satisfaction that goes with a duty done, and no more was necessary for the name of Valtierra to come to my lips immediately.

Águeda.—Of course . . . That's true . . . You are right.

Salazar.—Do you see?

Águeda.—So you, at least, understand that I am satisfied with my work?

Salazar.—With your work, yes. But it is a satisfaction of the will which may be at variance with the heart, which many times is at variance with the heart.

Águeda.—Say it all. Say that I am content to have sacrificed myself for the good of Lolín; but that I suffer, that I suffer terribly, still thinking of Valtierra. For you accepted as an article of faith that I can not forget him . . . say it.

Salazar.—It was you, yourself, who said right in this place, not long ago, that you would not forget, in a conversation that for my part—I swear to you—I shall not forget either.

Águeda (*In a bad humor, as if finding the conversation annoying*).—It is all the same to me.

Salazar.—And I feel it deeply.

Águeda.—Twice that word!

Salazar.—I have never claimed to suppress the verb “to feel” from the grammar. I limit myself to conjugating it always with a tacit auxiliary: the verb “to think.”

Águeda.—Very well. But that afternoon you seemed more reasonable. Or more generous.

Salazar.—I? Why?

Águeda.—You spoke to me of an hallucination of the feelings.

Salazar.—Which you rejected.

Águeda.—Of taking a false step.

Salazar.—Which you denied indignantly.

Águeda.—Of a possible mistake.

Salazar.—To which you opposed the assurance of your heart.

Águeda.—I was not prepared for a life of sentiment.

Salazar.—I said that, too; but I risked being mistaken. Such warnings . . .

Águeda.—Such warnings are generally made to people madly in love as I was, without thought, to get out of the difficulty, from habit. Discounting their futility . . . announcing to them a catastrophe, but knowing that they will be used in a few days to announce another . . . What a shame!

Salazar.—Those warnings, Águeda, independently of the fervor I put into them, were dashed to pieces against your conviction. Your assurance made of those warnings that afternoon words without feeling.

Águeda.—Words! . . . And I was able to be so frank at that time! . . . Now you see . . . In the confusion of my feelings, when sometimes disconcerted, other times gay, and at other times furious at what was happening, I believed I was going mad, I have had the frankness to repeat to myself your words one by one.

Salazar (*With emotion, in spite of himself*).—You did?

Águeda (*Almost surrendering*).—They seemed to me an excuse. They cleared up my doubts. They were my plank of safety. I believed you had spoken because you knew me; that in my case there was something logical, natural, human. It seemed to me impossible that, not being natural, you could foresee . . . (*Stops, hesitates; looks at SALAZAR.*)

Salazar (*Controlling his previous emotion*).—What, Águeda?

Águeda (*Disconcerted already*).—I don't know; I don't understand myself.

Salazar.—Try to understand yourself.

Águeda (Unable to express herself; in a tone of reproach).—
You don't help me.

*Salazar (Restraining himself).—*How can I?

*Águeda (Again excited).—*If you have to ask, it is because you can not . . . By no means . . . (*Cutting short the dialogue, she turns her back on SALAZAR, as if to withdraw; SALAZAR, going to her with passionate insistence.*)

*Salazar.—*Águeda, no! Stay!

*Águeda (Turning around, says):—*Salazar . . .

*Salazar (Controlling himself).—*Forgive me. Forget the tone, but heed the request, for God's sake, . . . stay. I am leaving in two hours. I have been for six years a useless intruder on the affections of all of you and this summer, unfortunately, the forced confidant of a sorrow which, moreover, it has not been in my power to help. My presence never was very agreeable to you.

*Águeda.—*Salazar . . .

*Salazar.—*And, from now on, in spite of myself, it will involve much that is painful and annoying, at least, the memory of these unhappy days.

*Águeda.—*No.

*Salazar.—*I mean that we are going to say good-bye for a long time, perhaps forever . . .

*Águeda.—*What?

Salazar (Finishing impassively, but deeply moved).—. . . if I have the strength. At any rate, I beg you again not to go away thus . . . brusquely. Help in a deception useless, but merciful; let me imagine that you are bidding farewell—not to the friend I have been—but to the one I should like to have been.

*Águeda (Frankly, and lowering her eyes).—*Now, I believe you unjust, Salazar. We have known each other for six years; for six years we have lived here together in "*Los Rosales*" and you mean nothing to me . . . is that it? Well, I close my eyes. I see the time that has passed, and, in these six years, I do not recall an impulse of my heart, a revolt of my instinct, a doubt of my thoughts, joy, sorrow, hope, disillusion, any moment of my life that has not been for us two the subject of a conversation, or a confidence. Deny it if you can. I have thought of it during these past days and I have been astonished, I confess to you, I have been astonished that the memory has not failed me a single

time. Whenever my heart prompted a step, there was Salazar, almost always a little too serious, to indicate to me my footing. If that is not friendship . . .

Salazar.—No; for remember the frowning look, the haughtiness, gracious in appearance, but in reality cruel, Águeda; the indignation almost with which you have always received my advice.

Águeda (With warmth and animation).—Always! And a few days ago, with the frown, haughtiness and all, I turned to you in search of that advice I had never taken. If that is not more than friendship, the need of my heart, faith in you, I do not know, I do not understand.

Salazar (Also with warmth).—I understand. It might be anything except kindness and affection. I am sure. Forgive me. The first time your heart had for any one a smile, a burst of sentiment, let us omit the name, it was not the friendship of six years, but the flaming casual friendship of an unknown that gratuitously enjoyed them.

Águeda.—Heavens, Salazar! I will tolerate in you reproaches, but not humiliation. You insist we should say good-bye and you are determined to give our farewell a certain solemnity. Perhaps without intending it, you are more cruel than I ever was; but I do not protest. On the contrary. I wish to contribute to the solemnity of our farewell. I wish to take advantage of this moment to exact a promise from you. Is it too much to ask?

Salazar.—Speak.

Águeda.—With all my heart, with all my soul, and this time *intending it*, too, I beg you that, if some day you remember me, you will not judge me by this sad affair of Valtierra.

Salazar.—What right have I to remember that which does not belong to me?

Águeda.—Remember me as I have always been. Not as during these months. With my defects which are many, with my few good qualities, for I must have some. With all that which is myself, yes. But this was not! . . . it never was!

Salazar.—Then, Águeda . . .

Águeda.—I do not know what it has been. A spell, a delirium, a nightmare. It must have been that. A bad dream and, on awakening, I realize the pain it left in my

heart. Not for a moment did I fail to understand that I was doing wrong. I do not owe to those days a single hour of happiness. I was never blind. But I loved without wishing to. I can't explain it to myself any other way, nor have I any other excuse, Salazar. I loved to test my love. As the farmhand sings in the field with no object but the joy of having his voice sound out in the open air. An echo of myself responded from another heart and it was my misfortune. Perhaps it would have meant happiness, had it come from another. At any rate, it was so . . . You know me, you believe me and you will forget . . . won't you? (*With a certain emotion in her voice, and approaching him.*) Will you promise me?

Salazar (In an outburst of joy he can not control).—Yes, I promise you . . . and thank you, Águeda.

Águeda (In a feminine manner, fully conscious of all the warmth of emotion of SALAZAR, and mistress of the situation from now on).—I am the one to be grateful . . . you, for what?

Salazar (Restraining himself, with a last misgiving, dissimulating).—I? . . . For what? . . . That is true. I do not know; perhaps because after these words we shall not have to be separated so long; perhaps because I can begin to fulfill my promise at once, pressing your hand with the pure friendship of the past; without a shadow coming between us. (*A silence. He takes a step towards her, extending his hand.*) Good-bye, Águeda.

Águeda (With a smile, retaining an instant SALAZAR's hand).—You are in a hurry.

Salazar.—I?

Águeda.—Yes, my friend. (*Releases his hand.*) It would be the first time you have left me without giving me some advice.

Salazar.—Now you no longer need it; you have suffered; sorrow teaches more than a good book.

Águeda.—But it makes one fearful.

Salazar.—Perhaps.

Águeda.—I deceived myself once, and it was so painful that I should like never to deceive myself again. Advise me. Is it possible to distinguish at the first moment true love from false? If it were not possible I believe I should renounce all love forever. I have become afraid.

Salazar.—You would do wrong; a life without love is ethically incomplete.

Águeda (*With a soft irony and filled with vivid interest*).—Your ethics is the guide book of lovers.

Salazar.—The guide book of lovers is the ethics of everyone. Why not? To do good and to love are the same thing.

Águeda.—I believe I shall understand you. Out with the advice.

Salazar.—First a memory . . . and the advice at the end. Will you permit?

Águeda.—I beg you.

Salazar.—There is in a small gallery in Italy a picture painted by Raphael, representing the Nuptials of Mary of Nazareth, Mother of Jesus. Have you seen copies?

Águeda.—Many. Go on.

Salazar.—Standing before that picture, one morning a long time ago, I understood what true love should be.

Águeda.—Were you in love?

Salazar (*A pause; with unmistakable emotion, looking into her eyes; his voice serious*).—I was already, yes, *Águeda*. (*A surprise which ÁGUEDA controls delicately*.) In the colors the artist put in the faces, there was revealed to me that morning fully the significance of a symbol that always seemed trivial to me in our story. Remember the Gospels. I refer to the branch which should bloom in the hands of the chosen husband, thus signifying the will of Heaven. Well, this branch which should bloom is the symbol of the true love that you seek.

Águeda (*Interested*).—By the flowers?

Salazar.—No. Because it has none. And because before it blooms it must send out roots; and because it takes root in the heart, living, and this process is painful and slow. There is no trivial and passing love that does not beckon to us with flowers in its hand. They are the offerings of the first moment and are ephemeral. Valtierra held them out to you. I saw one . . . and it was already withered when it fell on this table. True love is arid in the beginning. Rather than an offering, a torture. But when, after it has taken root, it sends forth flowers, these flowers of true love do not wither. As long as there is blood in our hearts, they will have sap which will renew them and preserve them; for they are born there; they do not come from without. (*He*

and ÁGUEDA are standing very near to each other. She controls now with difficulty her own impulses, seizing both hands of SALAZAR, who no longer restrains himself, and adds in a voice that is almost a sob:) And my advice is this, Águeda: distrust every love that bears flowers as an offering in the first moment. One must wait for those of true love, for they are long in coming, Águeda, always long. (*He draws her to him and she does not resist.*)

Águeda.—Are they very long in coming, Salazar?

Salazar.—Time is forgotten.

Águeda (*Scarcely able to speak, looking at him*).—Can they be six years? (*As if blushing, and feeling herself irresistibly drawn to SALAZAR at this moment. After this speech she hides her face on his shoulder.*)

Salazar.—No, Águeda mine! . . . They may be longer in coming and they are always less. Less, for the first that buds changes into flowers all the sufferings of other days. Longer, for years follow years, and in each year there is spring, and still in old age, when winter whitens the hair, the little snow flowers may be an offering of this love. (*They separate and stand as if in restraint a moment.*)

Águeda.—Are you going this afternoon, Salazar?

Salazar.—If you do not wish it, no.

Águeda.—Does your mother know what you have suffered these six years?

Salazar.—My mother! My mother knows that I have adored you from the first moment.

Águeda.—Then go and tell her to forgive me. Perhaps she will be glad . . . it would not be right to put it off. Does your mother love me?

Salazar.—For six winters I have talked of you. Once I lost your picture, the one when you were a little girl, that your father gave me . . . She took it! . . . And she never gave it back to me!

Águeda.—My mother! What a joy at last, these words . . . Isn't it true? Go . . . and do not forget me this winter, either of you.

Salazar.—But . . .

Águeda.—I have sinned . . . I shall punish myself . . . And, besides, it is your advice. (*Pointing to the climbing rose at the back.*) Look at the branches. They are without flowers . . . bare, dry . . . Perhaps my blindness has frozen them prematurely.

Salazar.—But the roots are there!

Águeda.—It does not matter. One must wait for the flowers of true love. And this time I want it to be true love.

Salazar.—I am sure already! I shall not submit!

Águeda.—We shall see each other again . . .

Salazar.—When? (*As if the words brought light, so great is the force of the promise he puts in his gesture and voice.*) When the roses bloom again! (They embrace.)

Curtain

THE PASSING OF THE MAGI

(*Los Reyes Pasan*)

A Comedy in One Act

BY EDUARDO ZAMACOIS

*Played for the first time in the Teatro Cervantes of Madrid,
in January, 1912.*

CHARACTERS

ASUNCIÓN (20), widow, niece of Doña Josefina.
DOÑA JOSEFINA (60).

JACOBITA (30), daughter of Doña Josefina.

INÉS, a young servant.

FILOMENA (8), daughter of Jacobita.

EMILIO (30), an engineer.

DON ERNESTO (50), bachelor, brother of Doña Josefina.

PEPE (20), } brothers of Jacobita.

JUAN (35), }

DON JOAQUÍN.

GARCÍA.

PEDRÍN, son of Jacobita.

Time, the present. The action in a private house in the suburbs of a Castilian city.

Translator's Note: The Day of the Kings, or the Magi (*Día de los Reyes*) is the children's festival in Spain. This festival of the Epiphany, as it is called by the Church, is celebrated on the sixth of January to commemorate the visit of the Wise Men to Bethlehem. As the Wise Men brought gifts to the Infant Christ, so they bring presents to the children, thus filling the place of the legendary Santa Claus or Saint Nicholas of the Northern nations. On the eve of the *Día de los Reyes*, Spanish children place their shoes outside the windows in the balconies, each shoe containing a wisp of straw for the horses of the Magi.

In the morning the shoes are found filled with candies and surrounded by gifts left by the Magi as they passed by.

THE PLAY

An elegant salon, or rather sun-parlor. At the right two doors, and between them a fireplace in which a fire is burning. At the left, two doors. On the table a chess board. At the back, a large window through which may be seen the snow-covered trees of a garden. It is night. When the curtain rises there is no one on the stage and a bell is ringing continuously.

SCENE I

ASUNCIÓN, then INÉS

Asunción (*At the left front*).—Inés! . . . Well, isn't anyone going to the door?

Inés (*At the right back*).—I'm coming right away. Here. What a lot of toys!

Asunción.—Thank Heaven!

Inés.—They have just brought them.

Asunción.—It was time. Give them to me quickly. I don't want my niece and nephew to see them.

Inés.—The man from the toy shop says there aren't any more music boxes.

Asunción.—It doesn't matter.

Inés.—I am going to see who rang.

Asunción.—It must be Don Emilio. (*Starts to leave at the left, but stops, listening.*)

SCENE II

ASUNCIÓN; EMILIO

Emilio (*From the right back*).—Asunción.

Asunción.—Wait a second. I am going ot put these

away. (*Goes off the stage and returns.*) They were toys for the children. I am the fairy of the toys. How are you?

Emilio.—And you are my little girl . . . and I your Magian King.

Asunción.—Who brings to me the illusion . . . the divine illusion . . . of living once more.

Emilio.—And what is an illusion, if not a toy? . . . And your family?

Asunción.—They are just finishing supper.

Emilio.—I am going to see them a moment and say good-bye.

Asunción.—Is your baggage ready?

Emilio.—At the station. I am going on the ten o'clock train; a few minutes past ten, from the window, you can see it pass. It will send you a farewell greeting from me, for there is a curve in the road there and the locomotives always whistle.

Asunción.—I know it. It is a voice that makes me sad, for it always speaks to me of you.

Emilio.—Tomorrow I shall be in Coruña and shall wait at the hotel which you know. You were right, not going together our rebellion will be excused more easily. But, do not delay; I should die of uneasiness and impatience! . . . Without you . . . Do not hesitate. Remember an hour, a moment of hesitation, are enough to shatter a whole life.

Asunción.—I shall come, Emilio.

Emilio.—Asunción, I trust in you.

Asunción.—Do not doubt.

Emilio.—Everything is arranged, then?

Asunción.—Everything.

Emilio.—And if anything should happen . . .

Asunción.—Nothing can happen. What?

Emilio.—Something unforeseen.

Asunción.—I should telegraph you.

Emilio.—All right, I am going to see the family.

Asunción.—Good-bye, but not for long.

SCENE III

THE SAME and Doña Josefina, preceded by FILOMENA and PEDRÍN

Emilio.—Doña Josefina . . .

Doña Josefina.—Hello, is it you, Emilio?

Emilio.—I just came a moment ago. I came to say good-bye.

Doña Josefina.—How is that? Are you going away?

Emilio.—This very night; to Coruña. (*Hesitating.*)

Doña Josefina.—For very long?

Asunción.—He doesn't know.

Emilio.—Asunción is right. I intend to come back, but . . . Suppose I shouldn't? . . . Long journeys are like life; it is known when one is to be born, but never when one is to die.

Doña Josefina.—The news surprised me. It is a question, apparently, of a sudden journey?

Emilio.—No, señora; it is one I have thought about a good deal. I believe that serious situations should be faced in this way . . . because, ordinarily, to reflect is not to act.

Doña Josefina.—Then you are not going to stay in Coruña? Are you going to America?

Asunción.—To Buenos Aires.

Emilio.—Probably.

Doña Josefina.—Indeed! (*Significantly.*)

Emilio.—So then, Doña Josefina, if you will allow me . . . for it is getting late . . .

Doña Josefina.—Go on, go on . . .

Emilio.—I shall go in and say good-bye to them.

Doña Josefina.—They are all in there.

Emilio.—Thank you. (*Goes out at the left back.*)

SCENE IV

ASUNCIÓN; DOÑA JOSEFINA; FILOMENA and PEDRÍN

Doña Josefina.—What is the matter?

Asunción.—Nothing, aunt.

Doña Josefina.—Are we beginning to hide the truth?

Asunción.—No, aunt, I assure you . . .

Doña Josefina.—Useless. When there is some great thing within us, ambition or remorse, we are often unaware of what is going on around us. That's the way with you. I have been noticing you for some time without your knowing it.

Asunción.—I am sad, that is all.

Doña Josefina.—Because Emilio is going away?

Asunción.—It would be foolish to deny it to you. . .

Doña Josefina.—Absolutely foolish.

Asunción.—It is something I can not talk about with any one and least of all with my cousin. Jacoba is hard. Have you ever known anything more inhúman than virtue which is born of a lack of heart? . . .

Doña Josefina (*Sitting down in front of the fireplace*).—Very true. But I understand you; I have always loved you. (*Pause.*) And those children? . . . Come here by the fire. It is always cold by the window. Do you hear, Pedrín?

Pedrín.—Grandma.

Doña Josefina.—Can you read the thermometer?

Pedrín.—I can.

Filomena.—Fibber! I say no, grandma, for he can't.

Pedrín.—Don't pay any attention to her. She is fibbing.

Doña Josefina.—Come. Be careful about saying naughty words. Besides, now we shall see. Pedrín, go and see what the thermometer says.

Pedrín (*Approaching the window*).—I declare!

Doña Josefina.—What's the matter?

Pedrín.—The whole garden is covered with snow.

Doña Josefina.—We know that. But . . . What about the thermometer?

Pedrín.—The thermometer . . . the thermometer . . . it says . . . it says . . . two degrees above zero.

Doña Josefina.—Are you sure?

Pedrín.—Of course; let Aunt Asunción look. (*ASUNCIÓN, seated at the left, is meditating, oblivious to the conversation.*)

Doña Josefina.—It isn't necessary. Come here to me. Asunción!

Asunción (Arousing herself).—Ah! . . . What?

Doña Josefina.—It is plain you have forgotten that this is the eve of the Magi. For you, too, the Magi will pass by

Filomena.—Grandma.

Doña Josefina.—What, my granddaughter?

Filomena.—Do you think the Magi will come?

Doña Josefina.—Why not?

Filomena.—Because it is so cold . . .

Doña Josefina.—What is the difference? They will come. Not even the cold in the hearts, which is worse than the cold out-of-doors, will stop them. They are immortal, because they are life.

Pedrín.—Well, I don't believe in them.

Doña Josefina (Severely).—Be still!

Filomena.—They will punish you.

Pedrín.—Mamma said so.

Doña Josefina.—Your mother says a lot of foolish things.

Pedrín.—She says the only Magian King is Don Isidro, who keeps the toy shop.

Doña Josefina.—I tell you to keep still, Pedrín! The Magi, Melchior, Gaspar and Balthazar, are real. I tell you so and that is enough.

Filomena.—Have you seen them, grandma?

Doña Josefina.—Lots of times.

Filomena.—What are they like?

Doña Josefina.—If you are good and believe what I say, I'll tell you. These messengers of Happiness are old men, very old men . . . very old, as old as the world, so it isn't strange that their long curly beards are as white as snow. Their eyes are kindly and their hands that scatter toys among the children and close the eyes of the sick and know how to caress and comfort the hearts of the sorrowing, are hands of mercy. They are very clever, too; so they know how to give to each one what will please him most.

Filomena.—In the letter Inés mailed for me, I asked them for a doll.

Pedrín.—I asked them for a box of lead soldiers with cannon and tents.

Doña Josefina.—Well, everything will come, and if not just these toys, they will bring others which will please you because they will be new. And what a fine journey theirs

is! . . . Following the light of a star, they come from the East, from the wonderful lands of the Sun. And they travel by night, for night is the fountain of dreams. And they travel over the snow, for snow is reality . . . this you will understand later . . . and they are never cold, for they are illusion, and illusion is fire. They go from house to house, the three together, knocking on the window-panes with their rosy fingers, and here they leave toys . . . there hopes . . . according to the ages of the people. No one sees them come; no one sees them go . . . and this mission of consolation, repeating itself from year to year, fills the lives of men.

Filomena.—And will the Magi never die, grandma, when they are so old?

Doña Josefina.—No, they are immortal.

Pedrín.—And where do they get all these things they bring us, grandma?

Doña Josefina.—Who knows? . . . Perhaps from the Sun; yes, I believe, my children, they get them from the Sun.

SCENE V

THE SAME and JACOBITA

Jacobita (*From the left back*).—Now he's going . . . Probably you have seen him.

Asunción.—Who?

Jacobita.—Him. He doesn't deserve to be mentioned in any other way. Of course we know where the shoe pinches.

Asunción.—Why I don't understand . . . him! . . . He must have a name.

Jacobita.—That he is no honor to.

Asunción.—Jacoba!

Jacobita.—Because his parents, and here's mamma to prove it, were not like him. Rather they were God-fearing old Castilians, and very considerate of others . . .

Asunción.—But when those you call "others" are nobody's, belong to nobody; when they are free and can go where they like . . .

Jacobita.—Like you, say it.

Doña Josefina.—Are you going to begin in the usual fashion?

Jacobita.—Say that to her.

Doña Josefina.—No, it rests with you. At least, if you are so anxious to quarrel, wait until the men are out of the house. There are guests.

Jacobita.—Fine people!

Doña Josefina.—I think they are all right.

Jacobita.—Mamma, that's like you! They only come to be a nuisance, and who are they? That ridiculous Don Joaquín; García, a dauber, who, when he dies, they'll have to bury standing, for he doesn't own enough to fall dead on; and "the traveler" . . . , who they say is going to Coruña for a few days, and who will end by emigrating to Buenos Aires. Of course it is the best thing for him to do since his wife made up her mind to leave him for good.

Asunción.—I beg you not to talk in such a manner.

Jacobita.—The truth hurts.

Asunción.—What you say is not the truth; exaggerations, harsh things . . .

Jacobita.—What do you think, mamma? A man like him, an engineer, belonging to our best society, when such a thing happens, as we all know happened to him, he ought to blow out his brains, so he might save us decent people the humiliation of having to accept him against our will.

Asunción.—You accept him! And who are you to set yourselves up to decide what one "ought to do?" You accept him! Is the fickleness of a wicked woman worth the life of an intelligent man?

Jacobita.—You defend him well.

Asunción.—It is my duty.

Jacobita.—I didn't know . . . (*Ironically.*)

Asunción.—We should all defend Justice.

Jacobita.—Especially when the one whom this Justice concerns interests us particularly.

Asunción.—Exactly. And what of it? . . .

Jacobita.—I was just remarking. Don't get angry.

Asunción.—You have children, a husband . . . You have never struggled with life, you have not suffered, you have never shed tears . . . You are too happy to be human! . . . On the other hand, I, who was a widow

when most women are still unmarried; I, who have been face to face with hunger; I, who know all the variations of sorrow, I have lived enough not to laugh at the way others live.

Doña Josefina.—Will you not both be still?

Jacobita.—It is she.

Asunción.—Because you force me.

Doña Josefina.—Silence, Asunción. (*In a motherly manner.*)

Asunción.—(*Meaning JACOBITA.*)—She is intolerable! (*She starts towards the dining room, but comes back when she sees DON ERNESTO and DON JOAQUÍN coming out.*)

SCENE VI

THE SAME; DON ERNESTO and DON JOAQUÍN

Don Joaquín.—Yes, sir, to be sure . . .

Don Ernesto.—Isn't it so? He is an intelligent fellow, enterprising, clever in business.

Don Joaquín.—Very.

Don Ernesto.—And he has, moreover, an enthusiasm that is contagious. I adore enthusiasm; it is the supreme force; enthusiasm succeeds where main strength fails. Say, shall we finish our chess game?

Don Joaquín.—What's the use? I give it up.

Don Ernesto.—Hello, are you afraid?

Don Joaquín.—Why you know my king was done for; he wouldn't last six moves.

Don Ernesto.—So I thought, but never mind. Defend him! And what about your sense of honor?

Don Joaquín.—Let's go to it!

Don Ernesto.—Do your best, Don Joaquín. Check.

Don Joaquín.—I anticipated that, Don Ernesto.

Don Ernesto.—Double check; bishop and rook.

Don Joaquín.—You are implacable.

Don Ernesto.—I am a brute; I'll take the rook.

Don Joaquín.—Wait . . .

Don Ernesto.—No, sir! Why should I wait? . . . I'll take the rook. (*They go on playing.*)

Doña Josefina.—What are your brothers doing that they do not go out?

Jacobita.—Finishing their coffee.

Doña Josefina.—I don't see why they should be so long at it.

Jacobita (Ironically).—Since there are guests . . .

Don Ernesto.—Checkmate!

Don Joaquín.—The deuce!

Don Ernesto.—Checkmate!

Don Joaquín.—It was a piece of absent-mindedness. Can I take it back?

Don Ernesto.—By no means.

Asunción.—Who won?

Don Joaquín.—*Don Ernesto*.

Don Ernesto.—I, your uncle! I am the Attila of the board. And this *Don Joaquín* defended his king like a Swiss!

Don Joaquín.—I never did better.

Don Ernesto (To Doña Josefina).—Hello, sister, why don't those children go to bed?

Doña Josefina.—They don't want to.

Don Joaquín.—Children ought to go to bed early.

Doña Josefina.—They insist on waiting for the Magi.

Don Ernesto.—Let them wait in bed, then; they are falling asleep.

Doña Josefina.—Pedrín, Filomena . . . get up!

Pedrín (Half asleep).—Let me be.

Doña Josefina.—You know the Magi like good children.

. . . Don't you hear?

Don Ernesto.—Have a cigar, *Don Joaquín*?

Don Joaquín.—Thank you.

Don Ernesto.—"Hoyo de Monterrey." No better.

Don Joaquín.—Fine.

Doña Josefina.—You'll see the Magi pretty soon.

Joacobita.—I've told you, mamma, that I don't like those tales. They used to be all right, but nowadays to tell children the Story of the Magi is simply ridiculous.

Doña Josefina.—Who told you so?

Jacobita.—It teaches them to believe in the supernatural, and makes them timid.

Don Ernesto.—Oh, go easy!

Doña Joaquín.—*Jacobita*, your uncle here believes in the Magian Kings, too.

Don Ernesto.—Especially in the king of clubs!

Doña Joaquín.—Ha! Ha! . . .

Don Ernesto.—Do you remember last night?

Don Joaquín.—I was just going to mention it.

Don Ernesto.—Three times running. I never saw anything like it!

Doña Josefina.—What a head! White outside, and inside a twenty year old

Don Ernesto.—But my sister is right. We ought to believe in the Magi, as we believe in the sincerity of our friends, in the success of our undertakings, in the honesty of the tavern keeper who serves our wine

Don Joaquín.—Exactly.

Don Ernesto.—We ought to believe in whatever, in one way or another, may help to beautify our lives. What matters it whether the chest which the Magi bring us contains toys or a wedding gift? For the child a toy is a delight, for a man a hope is a toy. The effect is the same. Everything looks alike.

Don Joaquín.—Long live the Magian Kings, Don Ernesto!

Don Ernesto.—And if it is the king of clubs
(To DON JOAQUÍN.)

Don Joaquín.—Don't cite exceptions. I should be a monarchist if all kings were like that one.

Jacobita.—Are you going out tonight, uncle?

Don Ernesto.—If you wish nothing

Jacobita.—What I wish, that is to say what I beg you

Don Ernesto (To DON JOAQUÍN).—You will see

Jacobita.—Is that you will go to bed earlier.

Doña Josefina.—Yes, brother, yes; it is getting time you realized your nights ought to be spent at home.

Don Ernesto.—God keep me from evil thoughts!

Don Joaquín.—He is still young.

Don Ernesto.—I am the symbolical Christmas tree; snow-covered without, full of life within. I know how bored I'd be by the fireside; I need liberty; the streets call out to me. I see a pretty blonde, with her skirts raised a little, this way and I look around at once.

Jacobita.—Why, uncle!

Don Ernesto.—Which shows that Nature arranges things very badly. What good are two eyes in your face? We could get along very well with one, like the Cyclops. The other ought to be in the back of the neck.

Don Joaquín.—Don Ernesto's not losing a bit of his spirit. I marvel at him. So, Don Ernesto, when you see a girl go by, a real girl, your nature still responds to her.

Don Ernesto.—How do you know so much about it, Don Joaquín? I should say it does. Not only responds, but asks! . . .

Don Joaquín.—Delightful!

Don Ernesto.—You have heard of Lord Byron?

Don Joaquín.—What!

Don Ernesto.—Do you know how that famous rake cured himself of his ill-feeling, or rather lack of feeling for the gentler sex? . . . (*Whispers in his ear.*)

Don Joaquín.—Really?

Don Ernesto.—It's infallible; I've tried it.

Don Joaquín.—Ha! Ha! Ha! . . . I'll follow your example. I'm a doubting Thomas! . . . (*They laugh and walk arm in arm.*)

Jacobita.—I wouldn't believe it!

Doña Josefina.—Here, I'm not going to wait any longer. Filomena . . . here! You, Pedrito, to bed . . . Pedro, don't make me angry! . . .

Pedrín (*Crying in a loud manner.*)—Oh! Oh! . . . My foot's asleep! . . .

Doña Josefina.—Well, wake it up. You, Filomena!

Pedrín.—I'm smarting all over.

Doña Josefina.—That's nothing.

Asunción.—Can I help you, aunt?

Doña Josefina.—It's not necessary; I can manage them. Get up, children!

Filomena.—I don't want to go to bed. I'm not sleepy. (*Crying incessantly.*)

Doña Josefina.—Be still!

Filomena.—Pedrín is the one that's sleepy. Look at his eyes. He can't keep them open.

Pedrín.—It's not so; it isn't. It's not so! . . .

Doña Josefina.—To bed! . . .

Jacobita.—To bed, yes, sir; of course! (*Starts to go out at the right front, but doesn't go.*)

SCENE VII

ASUNCIÓN; JACOBITA; DON ERNESTO; DON JOAQUÍN

Don Ernesto.—Poor sister! She's as good as gold!

Don Joaquín.—That is evident.

Don Ernesto.—I don't know how she has the patience to struggle against so many; the children on one side; their mother on another, Asunción on another . . .

Jacobita.—And you, uncle?

Don Ernesto.—And I . . . why, I don't keep still either, only, not to seem immodest, I was going to mention myself last. Wonderful Josefina! She is our refuge: children, grandchildren, widowed nieces, troublesome brothers . . . we all live under her protection. She draws us to her and her goodness imposes her will on us. The day when that woman, weary of waiting on her relatives, is so selfish as to die, the house will go to pieces.

Don Joaquín.—And your husband, how is he?

Jacobita.—In fine health.

Don Joaquín.—Does he write to you often?

Jacobita.—Every day.

Don Ernesto.—Too often! Men who insist on prolonging the honeymoon are intolerable. Honey makes one sick. In your place, I should get a divorce.

Don Joaquín (To JACOBITA).—I hear he is coming back soon. (*Continues talking to her.*)

Don Ernesto (To ASUNCIÓN).—And you? Are you sad? . . . Niece, this year the Magi have forgotten you and me. (*Pause.*) I know what is the matter with you. You haven't told me, but I can guess. What else should it be? . . . Asunción, look into my eyes, that way . . . so I can see that you are almost ready to cry. Am I not kind and can't you have confidence in me?

Asunción.—Yes, uncle.

Don Ernesto.—Then believe me: that . . . you understand . . . that about which we have both been thinking for quite a while, can't he helped. He is going away . . .

Asunción.—I know it.

Don Ernesto.—He is going away, and for a long time. He came to give me a farewell embrace.

Asunción.—And I, too, feel a desire to embrace you . . .
Don Ernesto.—My little girl! . . .

Asunción.—A great desire. Embrace me, uncle, so! . . .

Don Joaquín (*To JACOBÁ*).—What is the matter with them?

Don Ernesto.—Are you, too, thinking of going away?
(In a low voice and frightened.)

Asunción.—I don't know. Don't ask me. I only know that I love you very much.

Jacobita (*To DON JOAQUÍN*).—They understand each other so well; she ought to have been his daughter.

SCENE VIII

THE SAME and EMILIO, JUAN and GARCÍA, afterwards
 PEPE in his shirt sleeves

Juan.—Yes, don't fail to write to us.

Emilio.—I'll send you some cards.

Juan.—And when you have been in Buenos Aires a couple of months send me a long letter telling me in detail all the ins and outs of that great city. I shall be very much interested.

García.—And I, too.

Emilio.—Are you thinking of going out there?

Juan.—Who can tell? For an ambitious fellow like myself the miserable atmosphere of a third-rate capital is not the most fitting.

Emilio.—As I was telling you a moment ago, I dream about Buenos Aires. Such a voyage, long and expensive, from which it is not easy to return very soon, is the best means of straightening out one's life, of blotting out one's past. If I could only tell you how much harder than it is to live, is the remembering what one has lived through!

Don Ernesto.—You have traveled much, Don Emilio.

Emilio.—Enough, and it is a vice of mine.

García.—That, and pretty faces.

Emilio.—I don't count that among my sins, and may the moralists pardon me. Love is for me a refined pleasure, that appeals more to the intellect than to the feelings. Besides, between the idea of travel and of love there are note-

worthy points of resemblance, for love is like travel in that it means to examine, to explore . . . the heart of the person with whom we think we are in love.

Don Joaquín.—An original theory.

Don Ernesto.—According to which, it follows that, without having left my province, I have made longer voyages than any ship.

Emilio.—I detest quiet. Oh, the sadness of arid lives, lives that are uneventful, those whose faces throughout the years show always the same expression. There is no tragedy that exceeds the great familiar tragedy, that never-ending tragedy, the product of ennui, the tragedy of hearts to which nothing happens. On the other hand, how sweet, how ardent, how artistic it is to travel, to wander . . . to be a wave, a cloud . . . to take root nowhere, to make of one's existence a dream and a journey . . .

Asunción.—Splendid!

Juan.—Very good. If I could, I should go with you.

García.—And I.

Don Joaquín.—Give me your hand. We are alike. My weakness is variety. When I was young I had a sweetheart, a regular one . . . whom I was going to marry. Fortunately . . .

Don Ernesto.—Fortunately for her.

Don Joaquín.—That's it; fortunately for her, I didn't. For at the beginning of our relations I wouldn't have exchanged her for the most beautiful woman in the world; and then . . . frankly, I should have been capable of deceiving her by loving the ugliest.

Pepe (Coming out hurriedly from the right back).—Forgive me, old fellow, if I don't go with you. I have to dress.

Emilio.—That's all right; don't trouble.

Pepe.—Well, then, my best wishes, you know, for a fine trip.

Emilio.—Good-bye until we see each other again . . . in this world or in the other. (*They embrace.*)

Pepe.—Oh, we'll run across each other some time; the world is small. Good-bye. They have been waiting for me since nine o'clock; it's terrible! (*Goes out.*)

Emilio.—I must go, too; it is late. Señora . . .

Jacobita.—*Bon voyage!* (*Coldly.*)

Emilio.—Asunción . . .

Asunción.—Good-bye, Emilio, may you be very happy.

Emilio.—And you, too, so that I may be; I beg your pardon, so that we all may be. Don Ernesto, shall we see each other again?

Don Ernesto.—If we do not, it will be because I have departed—which wouldn't be a great loss. Well, all kinds of success!

Emilio.—Say good-bye to your sister for me, Don Joaquín . . . Friend García . . . (*Gives him his hand.*)

Juanito . . . (*Embraces him.*)

Juan.—García and I can't go with you, for we have to wait for Pepe.

Emilio.—It is not necessary. Why, it's half past nine—just time to get to the station.

Don Ernesto.—There's a cab stand there at the corner.

Emilio.—I know. Thank you. Good-bye, gentlemen. But where are you going?

Juan.—Why, we must at least go as far as the door with you. (*GARCÍA and JUAN go out a moment at the right center. ASUNCIÓN, wiping her eyes, goes out at left front.*)

SCENE IX

JACOBITA; DON ERNESTO; DON JOAQUÍN

Don Ernesto (Confidentially).—Did you notice?

Don Joaquín.—What?

Don Ernesto.—Asunción. It seems to me—and I'm not usually mistaken—that for my poor niece the Magian King is passing tonight . . .

Don Joaquin.—And that king is not one of those that will come back next year.

Jacobita.—I shouldn't be so sure!

Don Ernesto.—It is safe not to be sure.

Jacobita.—There is, however, an excellent means, infallible perhaps, to cause him not to come back.

Don Joaquin.—What?

Jacobita.—For her to follow him.

Don Joaquin.—Jacobita!

Don Ernesto.—Don't pay any attention to her. The idea! This niece of mine always imagines strange things!

Jacobita.—It's a woman telling you.

SCENE X

THE SAME and DOÑA JOSEFINA, JUAN and GARCÍA

Doña Josefina.—At last, those children went to sleep. Fine sieve they gave me! Did Emilio leave? (*Takes her seat again by the fire. Carries a book in her hand.*)

Juan.—Just this minute.

García.—He asked us to say good-bye to you for him.

Doña Josefina.—Did he go in good spirits?

Juan.—Yes; a little nervous, but that's natural.

García.—Farewells always excite me, too. I try to overcome my weakness, but I can't. I get such a furious, and really ridiculous, desire to weep; I seem like a woman.

Doña Josefina.—Poor boy! . . . He is a fine fellow; he deserves to be happy.

Juan.—And he will be. He has the precious gift of conquerors: a strong will.

Doña Josefina.—To leave on a night like this is somewhat symbolical, isn't it? . . . A new illusion that draws him, that carries him away . . . There is in this simple act something like a new birth.

Don Ernesto.—Always illusions, sister! . . .

Doña Josefina.—Christ gave them his blessing. (*Alludes to the book.*)

Don Joaquín.—Really there is nothing that is worth more than an illusion.

Don Ernesto.—Since the illusion, whether it vanishes or not, is a reality. Let us always have illusions and we shall have our lives strewn with flowers.

Juan.—I defend mine.

Doña Josefina.—Are you convinced, Jacobita?

Jacobita.—Defects of the race.

García.—Blessed be the race that has such defects. From them were born the conquest of America and "*Don Quijote*."

Don Ernesto.—Yes, niece, illusions are the wine of the spirit, the banner, the enthusiasm, the faith, the altruism, the lance of *Quijote*. They inspire us like the band that blares and beats at the head of the regiment. Like the Amazon that pours its fresh waters many leagues out into the salty sea, so you should see to it that the joyous stream of youth should be so strong that you would continue to be

young long after you have begun to grow old. That is the way I do, and . . . look at me! . . .

Doña Josefina.—Come, brother, let me embrace you.

Juan.—Very good, uncle.

García.—You are inspired.

Don Ernesto.—I will give you, niece, the prescription for never growing old. It is a prayer I myself composed, and it begins this way: “May God keep you, Illusion; you are full of grace. The Lord is with you! . . .” Repeat it thirty times a day, and if your husband has ever thought he would become a widower, he will be disappointed.

SCENE XI

THE SAME and PEPE, *in his vest, with his tuxedo on his arm*

Pepe (Much vexed).—Mamma, mamma.

Juan.—Why, are you not ready yet? I’m not going to wait for you.

García.—Come on.

Pepe.—Wait a minute.

Doña Josefina.—What do you want?

Pepe.—Haven’t I any other necktie? Where’s the other one? The one I bought yesterday.

Doña Josefina.—You ought to know.

Pepe (To JACOBITA).—Have you seen it?

Jacobita.—I? Fine one to come to.

Pepe.—That’s true, I forgot.

Jacobita.—I never go into your room.

Don Ernesto.—Ask the maid.

Pepe.—She’s an idiot.

Juan.—But you’re all right.

García.—You’re fine.

Pepe.—Probably Asunción knows. Where’s Asunción?

Doña Josefina.—I guess she’s in her room.

Pepe.—Asunción, Asunción!

Don Ernesto.—Well, sir, that’s natural. He’s only twenty!

Pepe.—Hey! . . . Yes. Have you seen my tie?

Don Ernesto.—I’m fifty and I’m worse than he.

SCENE XII

THE SAME and ASUNCIÓN with the toys.

Asunción.—What tie?

Pepe.—The new one.

Asunción.—The white one?

Pepe.—Yes . . .

Asunción.—The one you got yesterday?

Pepe.—Yes, that's it.

Asunción.—I haven't seen it. (*They all laugh.*)

Pepe.—And they say a house without women is lost.

Here are three together and everything is upside down.

Doña Josefina.—It's your fault.

Asunción.—If you kept things in order . . .

Jacobita.—You don't imagine we are your slaves.

Pepe.—Not for a minute.

Jacobita.—Well . . .

Pepe.—I was going to be so swell.

Jacobita.—Why don't you get married?

Pepe.—Get married? . . . What I shall do is to go away to the ends of the earth. (*Inspecting himself before a mirror.*) Pshaw! I'll go as I am. Let's see? . . . That's not bad, I think. No . . . I tell you if there is anything that shows what a person is, it is the way he ties his cravat.

Doña Josefina.—Weren't there any more music boxes?

Asunción.—No.

Don Ernesto.—Where are you going to put the toys?

Asunción.—In front of the fireplace.

Doña Josefina.—It would be better in the balcony. It would seem more real to the children.

Pepe.—Ready. Am I presentable?

García.—A fashion plate.

Juan.—Let's go.

Pepe.—Now the details.

Don Joaquín.—The raincoat.

Pepe.—The raincoat, the gloves, a handkerchief . . .

Help me!

García.—The muffler.

Don Joaquín.—The umbrella.

Pepe.—Is it raining? . . . (*Looking out of the window at the back.*) I can't see. What do you think?

Jacobita.—How do I know?

Don Ernesto.—When a man begins to ask the women how he ought to dress to go out, he is done for.

Pepe.—All right, I'll take the umbrella. (*To JUAN and GARCÍA.*) Pick up your bones and come along.

Doña Josefina.—Don't get to bed late.

Pepe.—No, mamma.

Doña Josefina.—Nor you either, Juanito.

Juan.—No, mamma.

Jacobita.—“No, mamma.” They'll get back about the time the milkman comes around.

Pepe.—Give me a cigarette, García. In this weather it's a good thing to be smoking.

Don Ernesto (Aside).—But, do you think?

Don Joaquín.—Of course.

Juan.—Are you going out?

Don Ernesto.—Yes, to the Club a while. He insists on watching the passing of the Magi . . .

Doña Josefina.—I understand you.

Don Ernesto.—But you go on. I'll come with Don Joaquín.

Juan.—Good-bye.

García.—Ladies . . .

Asunción.—Good-bye, Señor García.

Pepe.—Good-bye, everybody. (*Mysteriously.*) Mama, have you any money?

Doña Josefina.—I've got a stick for you, you scamp.

Pepe.—I need it.

Doña Josefina.—For foolishness.

Jacobita.—Say yes, for foolishness!

Pepe.—No, ladies, I have debts.

Doña Josefina.—Then you'll learn by experience.

Pepe.—Sacred debts . . . I swear it!

Don Ernesto (To DOÑA JOSEFINA).—Don't pay any attention to him. (*To PEPE.*) You know a man brags as much about what he owes as what he pays, and perhaps he may brag a little more about the former.

Pepe (Comically).—Well, none of you have five pesetas worth of pity for me in your pockets . . . So long! (*Kisses DOÑA JOSEFINA and goes out hurriedly.*)

SCENE XIII

DOÑA JOSEFINA; ASUNCIÓN; JACOBITA; DON ERNESTO;
DON JOAQUÍN

Don Ernesto.—Now it's our turn, Don Joaquín. Will you help me put on my overcoat?

Don Joaquín.—With pleasure.

Don Ernesto.—What a job! Wait, I lost a sleeve.

Don Joaquín.—You did?

Don Ernesto.—Yes. Darwin spoke of the struggle of man with his environment, as the source of natural selection; but he forgot to speak of the "struggle of a man with his overcoat," which is more important.

Asunción.—I'll help you put on yours, Don Joaquín.

Don Joaquín.—Many thanks, Asunción, many thanks. Good night.

Asunción.—Good-bye, Don Joaquín.

Don Joaquín.—Jacobita . . . , I don't like to see you serious.

Jacobita.—Good-bye, Don Joaquín.

Don Joaquín.—Doña Josefina, kiss the children for me.

Doña Josefina.—Good-bye, Don Joaquín, and I hope you'll come often.

Don Joaquín.—With the greatest pleasure, señora, with the greatest pleasure.

Doña Josefina.—Wrap up well. Do you carry an umbrella?

Don Ernesto.—Never.

Don Joaquín.—Mine is big enough for two.

Jacobita (To Doña Josefina).—One would think you didn't know him.

Don Ernesto.—You have succeeded in distracting me; the seven of spades always takes the king?

Don Joaquín.—Always; especially if you meet a pretty blonde as you leave the house. I've tried it.

Don Ernesto.—You have?

Don Joaquín.—Now we'll talk.

Don Ernesto.—For I know a blonde . . .

Don Joaquín.—But the meeting must be accidental!
(They go out.)

Jacobita.—Time has passed Uncle Ernesto by. He is always the same! (Long pause.)

SCENE XIV

DOÑA JOSEFINA; ASUNCIÓN; JACOBITA

Doña Josefina.—It's cold tonight.

Jacobita.—Real cold.

Doña Josefina.—I am beginning to get sleepy. I wonder what time it is?

Jacobita.—About ten o'clock.

Asunción.—Ten! . . . (Goes to the window, where she remains looking at the fields.)

Doña Josefina.—Did you wind the clock in the dining room?

Jacobita.—This afternoon.

Doña Josefina.—For since my brother offered to look after it, his head is so flighty the clock goes crazy; the minute hand points to one hour and the clock strikes another. (Pause.) Asunción.

Asunción.—What is it, aunt?

Doña Josefina.—What are you doing?

Asunción.—Nothing; watching it snow.

Doña Josefina.—Is it snowing much?

Asunción.—Quite a bit. The roads are out of sight and the fields are all white, so white in the moonlight . . .

Doña Josefina.—Did you notice whether Pepe wore his muffler?

Jacobita.—I think so.

SCENE XV

THE SAME and INÉS from the right center.

Inés (With a newspaper).—They have just brought it.

Doña Josefina.—Give it to the young lady.

Inés.—Señorita Asunción . . .

Asunción.—Leave it there.

Jacobita.—Bring it here. Did you warm my bed?

Inés.—Yes, señora.

Doña Josefina.—What's Juana doing?

Inés.—Finishing scrubbing.

Doña Josefina.—Have the dogs had their supper?

Inés.—I should say; a long time ago.

Doña Josefina.—Did you close the garden gate?

Inés.—Yes, señora, and the door.

Doña Josefina.—All right, you may go to bed now.

Jacobita.—But don't leave the light burning as you did last night. Those are thoughtless things that cost money.

Inés.—I'll be careful. Until tomorrow.

Doña Josefina.—If God wills . . .

Inés.—If God wills . . . (*Humbly.*)

Doña Josefina.—People say: "If God wills."

Inés.—I said it.

Doña Josefina.—These servants, when they lose their religion, are dreadful. (*Reads in a book.*)

SCENE XVI

THE SAME, *except INÉS.*

Jacobita.—The paper gets worse every day. There isn't a thing interesting in it. (*Reading.*) "Linguistic Congress" . . . That doesn't interest me. "Journey of Señor Gonzalez" . . . Nor that; I don't know him. "Markets" . . . "The Question of Irrigation" . . . "New Railway" . . . "Religious Bulletin" . . . Let's see . . . (*Pause.*) Tomorrow we are going to have a good preacher.

Doña Josefina.—Listen. About what we were just discussing with my brother.

Jacobita.—About what?

Doña Josefina.—About illusions. They are sanctified here in the parable of Mary and Martha.

Jacobita.—I remember it.

Doña Josefina.—Do you want to hear it?

Asunción.—I can hear all right from here.

Jacobita.—Why, we know it by heart, mamma!

Doña Josefina.—That doesn't matter. If any one needs to meditate over it, Jacoba, it is you. Listen, listen both of you, "Chapter ten, verse thirty-eight of the Gospel of Saint Luke." It's talking about Jesus, our Lord.

Jacobita.—What a bother!

Doña Josefina.—"Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman

named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Jacobita.—Mamma, I'll see you in the morning.

Doña Josefina.—I thought this pious reading would interest you more.

Jacobita.—It's according; now I'm sleepy.

Doña Josefina.—Put out the light.

Jacobita.—It is. And believe me, if in this parable the part of Martha corresponds to me, I am very well satisfied. Good night. (*Goes out without looking at Asunción. The stage remains dimly lighted. Doña Josefina continues reading. Asunción remains motionless in the white light of the window bathed in the moonlight.*)

SCENE XVII

DOÑA JOSEFINA; ASUNCIÓN

Doña Josefina (Reading again).—“And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” (*Long pause.*) Asunción.

Asunción.—Aunt?

Doña Josefina.—What are you doing?

Asunción.—I am watching it snow. I am dreaming . . .

Doña Josefina.—Come here, come to me. Don't be sad, don't cry. You, after all, like Mary, have “chosen that good part,” which shall not be taken away from you. You still have illusions. Come.

Asunción.—In a minute; wait.

Doña Josefina.—For what, child?

Asunción.—The ten o'clock train that Emilio is going on. I want to see it go by.

Doña Josefina.—Well, we shall hear it from here and then you can go and look out. We'll both listen. Come on . . . (*Asunción approaches slowly.*) Let's talk a bit. I know you have a lot to say to me.

Asunción.—Yes; to you and only to you I can talk, for twice in my life you have been a mother to me: when a little girl you took me in and educated me as your own daughter . . . perhaps with more affection, because I aroused your pity; and then, when I was left alone again, poor, abandoned by that man, whom, in the end, death did well to take away.

Doña Josefina.—Yes, my daughter.

Asunción.—But you know why I married him. Jacoba never liked me, nor Pepe either. I realized that I was in the way here; my presence in the house was troublesome; I felt that I was not wanted . . . for we unfortunate ones are not wanted anywhere . . . Oh! Believe me, I should not have come back if it had not been for you.

Doña Josefina.—It is true, poor girl, that sorrow, the king and master of the world, has not forgotten you.

Asunción.—And now I need you again.

Doña Josefina.—Tell me about it.

Asunción.—Now more than ever, I need you to love me, to forgive me, to defend me . . . to be once again my mother! . . . (*Weeps.*)

Doña Josefina.—Tell me; you can tell everything to one who has loved you with her whole heart, as I have. You are very fond of Emilio, I know that.

Asunción.—He is my illusion; the only thing able to fill my heart.

Doña Josefina.—The situation is a difficult one. It is a question, I will not say of something impossible, but very dangerous. One must not forget the provincial atmosphere in which we live. Ah! If, instead of guarding our hearts in nobility, we guarded nobility in our hearts, if we could transpose these terms, always enemies! . . .

Asunción.—But, there is no use in talking of that. The harm, if harm there be, is already done.

Doña Josefina.—How is that? . . . Look at me!

Asunción.—Yes, aunt.

Doña Josefina.—Oh, my poor girl . . . poor girl!

Asunción.—I was too lonely, too sad, when he appeared at my side.

Doña Josefina.—What folly!

Asunción.—A widow, without children, without faith . . . my heart lay in silence—the silence of a house whose last inhabitant had gone away leaving it without furniture and with the windows closed. Nothing in it! Nothing but memories! . . . And memories sound so hollow in empty hearts! (*Pause.*) It was last year, Emilio had just returned from Paris, and on account of his manner, his spirit, the great drama of his life, he was so different from other men! . . . We talked with each other frequently, and without either of us suspecting it, we kept drawing nearer together. My solitude, my weariness, my suffering helped him to win . . . for suffering is the surest window through which love can enter into the heart! . . . Besides, I found that our experiences had been so much alike. The ingratitude of a woman had left him alone, as the death of a man had left me; and ingratitude is like death—both are negations, for if one separates us from our loved ones destroying their physical life, the other separates us from them killing them in the inner life of memory. He, alone . . . I, alone . . . Why, not remedy by a bold rebellion the work of ingratitude and of death? Why not join together in rebuilding our future?

Doña Josefina.—Asunción! . . .

Asunción.—I know what you are going to say to me.

Doña Josefina.—Is it true?

Asunción.—Yes . . . Forgive me. (*Kneeling.*) The extent to which I have suffered gives me the right to be selfish.

Doña Josefina.—You are going away with him? . . . When?

Asunción.—Yes . . . soon; he is my husband.

Doña Josefina.—My daughter! . . . My Asunción! . . . You are going with him?

Asunción.—Yes, aunt. This conversation was to be something more than a confession; it was to be a farewell.

Doña Josefina.—My daughter! I am powerless to keep you at my side! If I could only follow you!

Asunción.—Excuse me . . . forgive me . . . defend me by your silence from those who, in a few days, will ask about me. Embrace me, so . . . repeat to me

those words of consolation, such pretty ones, that you said a little while ago to the children. Talk to me of my illusion . . . It is my toy! . . . You, when you saw me sad, used to say to me: "Play Asunción, all your life, play with your illusions, never cease to play . . . laugh; those dreams have taken the place of the Punch and Pierrot of your childhood. . . ." I have followed your advice; I wish to be born again . . . I wish to stop my ears in order not to hear the great sob of life . . . Aunt, my darling aunt! . . . This is the night of the Magi . . .

Doña Josefina.—You will be happy. . . . God grant that you may! . . . But, I? I, who have nothing more to hope?

Asunción.—You from this moment may begin to hope; you will be myself; you will live again in me.

Doña Josefina.—When are you going?

Asunción.—Tomorrow.

Doña Josefina.—Have you packed your baggage?

Asunción.—Everything.

Doña Josefina.—And have you plenty of money? . . . Never mind, I shall give you some more. I have some money for you . . .

Asunción.—Do not weep.

Doña Josefina.—You will write to me, Asunción? You will keep me informed of everything that happens to you, good or bad?

Asunción.—Yes, yes, stop! . . . (Pause.) Ah! (With joy.)

Doña Josefina.—What is it?

Asunción.—I think I hear it.

Doña Josefina.—I don't understand: the train?

Asunción.—Yes, the train . . . (Both listen.)

Doña Josefina.—It is.

Asunción (Going to the window).—There it comes! . . . I see the light of the engine . . . red on the white fields.* Now it's going to whistle. (The whistle of a train is heard. ASUNCIÓN, from behind the glass, waves a handkerchief.)

Doña Josefina (Weeping).—The Magi are passing . . . and they are taking her with them . . . And I can do nothing!

Curtain

*Translator's Note. Spanish locomotives carry a large red light instead of the headlight common in the United States.

JUAN JOSÉ

A Play in Three Acts, in Prose

BY JOAQUÍN DICENTA

Played for the first time in the Teatro de la Comedia of Madrid, October 29, 1895.

Translated from the Spanish of the Thirteenth Edition.

BY MARK SKIDMORE

PERSONS

ROSA
TOÑUELA
ISIDRA
FIRST WOMAN
SECOND WOMAN
JUAN JOSÉ
PACO
ANDRÉS
EL CANO
IGNACIO
PERICO
THE TAVERNKEEPER
THE WAITER
✓ A JAILER
FIRST TIPPLER
SECOND TIPPLER
OTHER TIPPLERS

/ Author's Note: The actors who play this work should be careful to give the persons their true character; they are working-men, not loafers and, consequently, their diction must have none of the loafer's intonation.

Translator's Note: Lest the translator be accused of doing just what the actors are warned not to do, he begs to say that the persons of this play are, in the main, illiterates. Their speech is necessarily filled with slang and popular forms.

There is admittedly a larger number of slang phrases in the English version, for the reason that it is believed that colloquial English is more profuse in such expressions. Grammatical incorrections have in some cases intentionally been allowed to stand. The translator takes pleasure in thanking Professors Morley and Jaén of the University of California, as well as his colleague and friend, Professor Turrell, for help with difficult idioms and colloquialisms, though assuming himself all responsibility for any errors or mistranslations. *JUAN JOSÉ* is fortunately a play whose powerful appeal is proof against the imperfections and inadequacy of translation.

ACT I

The stage represents the interior of a tavern in the slums. At the back, a double glass door, with curtains over the panes. On the right side of the door in the background, a cabinet with a solid back and glass doors. Somewhat further forward, on the left, a wooden bar, covered on the top and along the edges with zinc; on the bar, and imbedded in it, a zinc tub from which protrudes a small pipe terminating in a rubber tube. On top of the bar, glasses, goblets, flasks, bottles filled with wine, and an earthen jar with a wooden cover. Between the bar and the cabinet, a practicable trap door which gives access to the cellar. To the left of the bar, between it and the cabinet, a door communicating with the kitchen.

In the foreground, on the left, a small table, around which, as well as around three or four other tables distributed conveniently about the stage, wooden stools are placed.

On the right, a glass door with red curtains which admits to a private room. Above the right hand door, a wall clock. Along the right hand wall, painted wooden shelving, with different kinds of bottles, full and empty.

Great care should be exercised with everything concerning the serving of the wine, the wiping of the glasses, and the other details which will be indicated in the course of the play.

The stage, likewise the cabinet and the private room, when it is used, should be lighted with gas jets.

When the curtain goes up there are seen on the stage four tipplers playing cards at a table somewhat back of the foreground. On a stool placed near the players is a tray with several half empty wine glasses. The Tavernkeeper beside the players, watching the game.

IGNACIO and PERICO, seated at the table on the left. On this table there is a bottle and two glasses. PERICO has a newspaper in his hand.

The waiter is standing behind the bar.

SCENE I

IGNACIO, PERICO, THE TAVERNKEEPER, THE WAITER,
FIRST TIPPLER, SECOND TIPPLER and TWO OTHER
TIPPLERS; finally ANDRÉS

First Tippler.—I open.

Second Tippler.—Ten more.

First Tippler.—I raise.

Second Tippler.—I call.

First Tippler.—You lose. (*Showing his cards.*) Two pair, kings and queens. . . .

Second Tippler (*Throwing his cards on the table angrily*).—What luck! . . . You've got to stand in with God to draw that.

First Tippler (*Making a chalk mark on the table*).—That's two games.

Second Tippler (*To the Waiter*).—Here boy, half a dozen! (*The WAITER fills some glasses at the bar; he places them on a tray, carries them to the players. Each of them takes a glass. When they finish drinking, the WAITER places the tray on the stool and removes the one that is on it. He goes to the bar and, after emptying what is left in the glasses into the earthen jar, wipes them. He performs all these operations while the dialogue continues.*)

First Tippler (*To another Tippler*).—Your deal.

Perico (*Reading aloud from the newspaper which he has in his hand, spelling out the words as he reads*).—“It . . . is . . . not . . . possi . . . ble . . . to . . . to . . . en . . . dure . . . in . . . si . . . lence . . . the . . . con . . . duct . . . of . . . a . . . go . . . vern- . . . ment . . . which . . . thus . . . vi . . . vio . . . lates . . . violates . . . the . . . most . . . sa . . . cred . . . rights . . . of the . . . ci . . . ti . . . zen. . . . It . . .

is . . . high . . . time . . . the . . . noble
Span . . . ish . . . peo . . . ple . .
should . . . pro . . . test . . . a . . . gainst
. . . such . . . in . . . ini . . . qui . . .
tous . . . iniquitous . . . and . . . un . . .
war . . . ranted . . . pro . . . ced . . .
ings . . . and . . . should . . . rise . . . to
. . . the . . . de . . . fense . . . of . . .
Liberty . . . and . . . the . . . country . . .
which . . . have . . . been . . . scoff . . .
scoffed . . . at . . . by . . . the . . . ad . .
. . . he . . . rents . . . of . . . the . . . re . .
. . . act . . . ion . . . reaction." (*He drops the paper and strikes the table with his fists.*) Why exactly!
. . . That paper is right. (*To IGNACIO.*) We've got to rise up and put an end to the gang of rascals who are oppressing us!

Ignacio (Scornfully).—Rise up! . . . It wouldn't be a bad piece of nonsense.

Perico (Surprised).—Nonsense!

Ignacio.—You heard right. I am older and I know more about those things than you do.

Perico.—What do you know? . . . Let's hear.

Ignacio.—What do I know? . . . I, too, have risen up. I went straight out into the barricades and I still limp from a bullet which they put through this leg of mine . . . Well, listen. A mason I was and a mason I am. I used to get ten *reales* and I still get ten *reales*. Those who gave me the dirty work to do go in coaches and I, on foot. They got an Excellency from the barricades and I, a nickname. They are called Most Excellent Señor Don So-and-So and I, Ignacio the Cripple . . . There you have what I got from rising up.

Perico.—But what the paper says . . . Liberty, the

Ignacio (Scornfully).—Words, fine sounds. . . . Flub-dub. This business of revolutions, this pull-that-fellow-down-so-I-can-get-up, is for the benefit of the politicians, the pompous gentlemen in frock coats . . . Are they for their benefit? Let them make them.

Perico.—So you . . .

Ignacio.—If they can't find another! . . . Suppose

you get into a squabble and you win and your party comes into power. Now they are in power. What good does it do? Will you put a pound more meat in your stew the next day?

. . . No. The next day you'll be dying of hunger again, working like a beast and those who said to you "Help me," will say to you, "Work till you burst, for that's what you're born for!"

Perico.—The fact is . . . (ANDRÉS enters from the back, and advances, without being seen by IGNACIO and PERICO until sufficiently near to hear the conversation. THE TAVERNKEEPER goes to the bar where he remains.)

Ignacio.—No, Perico, no. To fight for ourselves, to avenge ourselves on those who exploit us, for that I am always ready and I would say "Yes," not once but a hundred times, if you asked me. To start a revolution like that, our own, for ourselves, of course I would rise up, and I would even gladly lose both legs.

Andrés (*Who has come up to them, says, placing his hand on IGNACIO's shoulder.*)—If you don't lose them until then you'll walk to the cemetery.

Ignacio.—It's you, is it! What's that you're saying?

Andrés.—For you fellows to give me a drink and drop revolutions.

Perico (*Fills a glass and offers it to ANDRÉS.*)—Drink (ANDRÉS drains the glass. *The cardplayers get up and go to the bar.*)

First Tippler (*To THE TAVERNKEEPER.*)—Do I owe anything?

Tavernkeeper.—Your Good-will.

Second Tippler.—Fill 'em up again for a send off (THE TAVERNKEEPER fills some glasses and they all drink.)

Perico (*To ANDRÉS.*)—Will you have another?

Andrés.—Sure. (*He drains the glass which PERICO gives him. The TIPPLERS go out at the back of the stage.*)

SCENE 2

ANDRÉS, IGNACIO, PERICO, THE TAVERNKEEPER and THE WAITER

Ignacio (To ANDRÉS).—When you say you've got wine you mean you've got everything you need.

Andrés.—Because wine is the only good thing in this world. Of course it is, for, notwithstanding, and standing all the tavernkeepers set out, a fellow can still drink.

Tavernkeeper (Approaching the table).—Thanks awfully!

Andrés.—Don't mention it. (*To IGNACIO.*) You heard right. And the first time I went to the polls, here's what I said to a gentleman who bought my vote for three pesetas: "That's your business; I'm just a painter; so let's have the three pesetas; buy a drink and my vote is yours, and so's my sweetheart's, if it's any use, and perhaps it may be."

Ignacio.—And for what party did you vote?

Andrés.—How should I know? . . . For the party of three pesetas and a drink; I didn't give a damn about that!

Perico.—No?

Andrés (Pretending to bite his thumb nail).—Not that much! . . . Here's my idea: politics for politicians; women, sometimes; and wine at any time.

Tavernkeeper.—I agree.

Ignacio (To the TAVERNKEEPER).—Of course you would.

Andrés.—Wine is the cure-all. Are you tired of working? You come down from the scaffold, you pour a drink into yourself, and everything's fine. Do you have troubles? To whom will you go with them? To a woman? A woman will make them worse! To a friend? A friend will listen to them when he is not in a hurry and gets through talking himself. To wine, man, to wine. And better than to wine, to brandy.

Perico.—If you want brandy, order it.

Andrés.—Bring it on.

Tavernkeeper (To the WAITER).—Do you hear, boy? (*The WAITER fills some glasses with brandy and carries them to the table.*)

Andrés (Taking a glass).—Come on with your soda-water!

(*To IGNACIO.*) Aren't you going to drink?

Ignacio.—Not brandy. It goes straight to my head.

✓ *Andrés.*—That's a fine defect! . . . Why does a fellow drink? . . . To get drunk. Well, the sooner the better.

Perico.—That's so.

Andrés.—Brandy's the thing! For it's with drinking as with war; I've noticed it many times when I was a soldier. Our commanders would say to us: "Come, boys, we've got to take that trench." . . . And we would rush up the hill with our heads bent down and our guns leveled, while the enemy pelted us with bullets; and here one would fall, and there another; then ten and then twenty and, "Steady! Forward!"—ever forward till we arrived. But how we arrived! . . . Dripping blood and sweat, leaving the road piled with men with their toes turned up. On the other hand, they would say to the artillerymen: "Bring down that house!"—and Boom! Boom! In a few shots the house is pulverized! Well, with this (*Striking the table with his glass.*) the same thing happens. The bottles of wine are the infantrymen; you've got to bowl over a lot of them to get under the influence; the glasses of brandy are the artillerymen; a few are enough. I'm going to fire the first cannon-shot. (*He drains the glass.*) This is bliss, old man!

Ignacio.—And Juan José?

Andrés.—I am waiting for him. A nasty affair has turned up for us and we are going off together to settle it.

Perico.—Is he still crazy about Rosa? . . .

Andrés.—Worse than ever. We are neighbors now; we live at Number 23, two doors beyond the tavern. Rosa works at the same place as Toñuela. They will come here for us as soon as they leave the factory.

Perico.—So then Rosa? . . .

Andrés.—She's come back to her senses. The worst of it is that he's hard hit, and she . . .

Ignacio.—And she?

Andrés.—She is like all women, crooked.

Ignacio.—Oh, not all! I'm sure Toñuela . . .

Tavernkeeper.—You haven't any complaint, Andrés.

Andrés.—Not at present, no. Toñuela minds me. If there is enough for two, we make out; if there isn't, she turns the pots upside down and waits for another day; and if the brandy goes to my fingers and if my fingers go up to her face, she stands it as a matter of course; but you'll see how some day she'll do something foolish.

Ignacio.—The idea of you saying that! . . .

Andrés.—It wouldn't surprise me. Well, Toñuela is Toñuela, and Rosa . . .

Ignacio.—What?

Andrés.—She is made for another life. Lots of suppers, lots of satin dresses, lots of patent leather shoes, what a woman always has when she's pretty and isn't straight. That's why it goes so much against the grain for her to stick to work. And if she loved him, it wouldn't be so bad.

Perico.—Doesn't she love him?

Andrés.—It's only a whim with her. (*To Ignacio.*) Of course you know how they met.

Perico.—How?

Andrés.—Rosa was at supper with some young fellows in a tavern and Juan José, who drank more than now, came in. As soon as he saw that heavenly face, that figure, and those big eyes, and heard Rosa sing with the angelic voice which God gave her, he stood with his mouth wide open. The fun went on, and I don't know how it was, but the boys got drunk and started to beat her up. Then there was something doing! Juan José, who had already taken a fancy to her, got up and said: "I dare any one of you to touch her." The long and the short of it is that a terrible row took place; and, as Juan José is a scrapper, and when he starts he smashes everything in his road, he threw the young bucks out of the joint and was left in sole possession.

Perico.—Fine!

Andrés.—She liked his spunk and his nerve and, no doubt, she thought: "I've found my man." She continued to think so for about a year and now for a couple of months she's been wanting to throw him over.

Perico.—Do you know? . . .

Andrés.—I know there is a fellow hanging around, and I know she doesn't dislike him, because he is young and rich, and it doesn't hurt him to throw away five dollars on occasion.

Ignacio.—Do you know him?

Andrés.—You do, and so does Perico. It's Paco.

Ignacio.—The boss where Juan José works?

Andrés.—And if I tell you who is trying to win Rosa over for him, you will see that the case is not the best for Juan José.

Perico.—Well who? . . .

Andrés.—Who could it be; the old she-devil of this quarter, Seña Isidra. (*The door in the back opens and JUAN JOSÉ enters.*)

Tavernkeeper (*To ANDRÉS*).—Shss! . . . Juan José. (*JUAN JOSÉ goes toward ANDRÉS; the TAVERNKEEPER goes to the bar.*)

SCENE 3

JUAN JOSÉ, ANDRÉS, IGNACIO, PERICO, *the TAVERNKEEPER and the WAITER*

Juan José.—Good evening!

Andrés.—What's the matter?

Juan José.—The same that's the matter with any fellow who works from seven in the morning until dark; tired and sleepy. (*He drops on to one of the stools near the table.*)

Perico (*Getting up*).—And hungry. I declare that I've got a tickling down here. (*The stomach. To IGNACIO.*) Are you coming?

Ignacio.—Yes. I suppose the old woman has put the pot on the fire and there's no use in letting the potatoes get cold. A fine supper that, for a man who comes home tired to death!

Juan José.—That's better than nothing.

Ignacio.—That's so; I often don't have even that. (*To JUAN JOSÉ and ANDRÉS.*) Are you going to stay?

Andrés.—Waiting till it strikes seven to go and look for Antonio and fix up our little matter.

Ignacio.—See you later. (*IGNACIO and PERICO go out at the back, however, not without first paying the TAVERNKEEPER.*)

Tavernkeeper (*To the WAITER*).—Bring up two bottles of wine. (*The WAITER opens the trap door to the cellar, disappears through it with two empty bottles. In a little while he returns with them filled, leaves them on the bar, and goes into the kitchen. The TAVERNKEEPER begins to read a newspaper.*)

SCENE

JUAN JOSÉ, ANDRÉS and the TAVERNKEEPER

Andrés (To JUAN JOSÉ).—Drink. (Hanging him a glass.)

Juan José (Pushing it back with his hand).—I'm not thirsty. (He sits silent with his head resting on his hands.)

Andrés.—What's the matter with you then?

Juan José.—I told you before; I'm tired.

Andrés.—That's not it.

Juan José.—Anything you like. (Impatiently and looking at the wall clock.) How late they are!

Andrés.—Why they're not late! . . . They don't leave the factory till full seven o'clock, and they need more than a quarter of an hour to get here . . . Your jealousy is in a hurry, and makes you ill-humoured. It seems impossible that you! . . .

Juan José.—Drop it; let's not speak of it.

Andrés.—You ought to be kicked for it. It'd be fine for a man to be blue on account of a woman! The whole lot aren't worth a cent.

Juan José.—What do you know about it!

Andrés.—More than you, for you don't know what's eating on you because you're jealous.

Juan José.—Of course I am, Andrés, and my blood is set on fire when I imagine that Rosa may no longer love me.

Andrés.—And who told you to imagine it?

Juan José.—How should I know! . . . It's an idea that has gradually got in here (Indicating his forehead) little by little, but firmly; it's just as though it had been driven in with a hammer; and I can't get rid of it; and it tortures me; and it drives me frantic; and makes me feel like I am on coals of fire.

Andrés.—You're still a school boy.

Juan José.—I don't know what I am; I only know what is happening to me; I only know that Rosa is no longer the same toward me. (In a gloomy tone.) And then Paco, that kid, who never had a thing in the world to do except inherit his father's business and money, never leaves her day or night. He imagines that I don't understand. Of course I understand. (In a threatening tone.) He'd better look out!

Andrés.—Perhaps it's just your suspicions.

Juan José.—It is ~~not~~, Andrés, it is not. I've been watching him for a long time. The other day, Rosa came for me at the works and Paco planted himself in front of her and began to let out compliments and show off for her benefit his fingers covered with rings and said to her, looking at me as though joking: "What luck some men have and what poor pay." She laughed at his talk and I . . . I went on working while the sissy joked, and I kept looking at him, and, at the same time, at my patched blouse and his new clothes, at the plaster on my hands and the rings on his, and I felt . . . I don't know what I felt, but I clutched with rage the handle of the trowel and I almost drove straight into his breast that iron tool covered with the lime we mix so he can shine . . .

Andrés (Jestingly).—You should have done it, and then, to prison! . . . (*With sad irony.*) You have a way of settling things that I like!

Juan José (After passing his hand over his forehead as if he were trying to get rid of a wicked thought).—I'm not bad, Andrés; I don't want to be. And I've had plenty of chances, for the fellow that is left in the street without any other protection than God's is put nearer the prison than the church. No, I don't want to be; I never have wanted to be a bad man; but as far as Rosa is concerned: Let them not touch her! Let them not take her away from me, because I'll be worse than bad . . . (*Desperately.*) If she! . . .

Andrés (Interrupting him).—I'm coming to that. If I suspected that a woman was false to me, do you know what I'd do?

Juan José.—What?

Andrés.—First, find out if it was true, for sometimes ideas get into a fellow's head just because they do, and he thinks a hemp seed is a ball on the Segovia bridge.

Juan José.—And if it was true?

Andrés.—If it was true! . . .

Juan José.—What would you do?

Andrés.—Very simple. To him, nothing; for looking at it squarely, no one is to blame because the woman a man is living with is not on the level. To her, yes; take her by the topknot and mellow her ribs with a club, and open the door and give her a couple of kicks, and put her out, and be as good as new.

Juan José.—I leave Rosa!

Andrés.—If she was deceiving you, why not? Have you signed a paper to live with her till you are buried?

Juan José.—There is no need. In matters of loving we sign with this, (*The heart*) and when this says, "I truly love," it's signed for life.

Andrés (In a bantering tone).—I have made a few signatures like that and then I rubbed them out. Not a trace is left. Love fades quicker than ink.

Juan José.—Yours, perhaps, but not mine. I leave my Rosa! . . . Lose her! Tear her out of here! . . . (*Striking his breast.*) I couldn't; she's firmly rooted and . . . I know what I mean; I can't explain it, but I know . . . Well, suppose I said, "Rosa is no more," it would be all over with me.

Andrés.—Pshaw! I wouldn't get blue too quick for any woman! . . . Put it at the worst, that the pain is so great you can't yank it out. Forget it by having a good time! Why not! . . . The world will go on just the same. There are other loves and a fellow clings to them until he gets over his spell.

Juan José—You do, because you have parents, brothers and sisters, a family which consoles you, which takes wicked ideas out of you. I have nothing. Parents? . . . God grant I had them! I don't know who mine were; I only know that they threw me out in the street, exactly as rubbish is thrown in the ditch for the junk man to pick up. (*With profound sadness.*) It must be fine to have parents! . . . I realize it when you go home to yours, and your poor, dear old mother gets up from her chair, and looks at you with love in her eyes, and says to you: "You must be a good boy, Andrés! . . ." You laugh, as if it didn't matter whether you saw or heard her, but it is plain from your face that there is joy and gladness in you, body and soul.

Andrés (Tenderly).—Because I am blind and unreasoning where she is concerned; because she is my mother; and your mother is the only woman who doesn't deceive.

Juan José.—I have never known such a woman. I have only known the one who picked me up by a stone pile, so she could carry me through the streets in her arms, and stir up people's pity by calling me her child. That's what they picked me up for! And then when I was older, and I could

walk alone, so I could beg with bare feet and so I could do it well and bring in a good haul,—if I didn't, they beat me to a jelly.

Andrés.—It really is terrible! . . . (*Sadly.*)

Juan José.—You don't know anything about it, *Andrés*, you've got to pass through it. I lived a long time begging a crust of bread for others to eat, just as now I earn it for others to enjoy. Affection? None. Bad words and worse deeds. Blows, not kindly blows like parents give their children to make them mend their ways, but blows like the mule driver gives his beast when he can't budge the load. They never said to me when they struck me: "Take that, you scamp, and mend your ways!" They would say to me: "Take that, you scoundrel, and bring back more next time!" Of course you see there's a lot of difference! The memory of the blows parents give must taste like honey; the memory of those I used to get is as bitter as gall; and it brings to my mouth much rancor and hatred.

Andrés.—Poor *Juan José*!

Juan José.—Later, when I saw myself rid of my chains, I said, "Work!" . . . What did I find? . . . As an apprentice, the cuffs of my master and the overseers, and a dish of scraps in the corner; afterwards, much work and many trials, small wages, earned on two rickety boards, shivering with cold in winter, blistering my skin in summer, toiling from morning to night, to come home and find myself alone, with no one to come and say to me: "Rest, poor boy, for you deserve it!" That's the way I was living when I met *Rosa*. She gave me what I had not yet found in the world, affection. Do you think I could leave her or agree to let her leave me? . . .

Andrés.—I . . .

Juan José.—She leave me! . . . No, *Andrés*. She'd better not do it; she'd better not try it! . . . If she dared do it! . . . (*In a threatening tone.*)

Andrés.—Are you coming back to the same old song?

Juan José.—That's what I'd like, not to come back to it! . . . But these suspicions of mine are too much for me; they are too strong for me, and when I imagine that *Rosa* might leave me, go away with some body else, a cloud of blood rises before my eyes and . . . (*With anguish*)

and hatred) . . . It musn't happen, Andrés, it mustn't happen, because, if it does happen, I'm done for!

Andrés.—Stop your nonsense, because for the present it has no foundation, and drink this glass. (*Handing him the full one that has been left on the table.*)

Juan José.—You're right. It's better to keep still. (*Draining the glass at a single draught. The door at the back opens, and ISIDRA comes in. She goes to the bar.*)

SCENE 5.

JUAN JOSÉ, ANDRÉS, ISIDRA, and the TAVERNKEEPER.

Isidra (*To the TAVERNKEEPER*).—Give me brandy. (*The TAVERNKEEPER serves the glass to ISIDRA. She stands at the bar and sips it slowly.*)

Andrés.—Old Isidra. (*To JUAN JOSÉ, who turns around when he hears ISIDRA's voice.*)

Juan José.—That's the old woman that's getting Rosa in bad with her meddling.

Isidra (*As if she saw JUAN JOSÉ and ANDRÉS for the first time since her entry*).—I hadn't noticed! (*Coming up to them.*) Good evening, my boys!

Andrés.—Señora, please don't insult us for no one picked a quarrel with you.

Isidra (*Surprised*).—Insult you!

Andrés.—She says she doesn't and she has just called us her boys. Yours would be flattered if you had any.

Isidra (*Angrily*).—Shame on you!

Andrés (*With comic seriousness*).—Everybody is bound to meet his match some day.

Isidra (*To JUAN JOSÉ*).—Do you see what an evil tongue?

Juan José (*Dryly*).—There are worse ones and ones that do more harm. (*Firmly.*) Mind how you use yours for it may come high.

Isidra.—I? (*As if surprised.*)

Juan José (*As before*).—You!

Isidra (*As if she didn't understand and with feigned sincerity*).—What's the matter, laddie? . . . Has a viper's tongue been stinging you?

Juan José.—Perhaps so. You know what I mean, so

look out, for the woods is not all marjoram, and some day because of your tricks, you are going to step on something that hurts you.

Isidra.—I! Why, what are you saying?

Juan José.—You know what I said, and that's enough.
(To ANDRÉS.) Let's go look for Antonio, for it's time now.
(Getting up.)

Andrés.—All right. (He gets up, too.) When the girls come let them wait.

Tavernkeeper.—God be with you. (JUAN JOSÉ and ANDRÉS go toward the back; when they get in front of ISIDRA, ANDRÉS gives her a little pat on the shoulder and says waggishly.) Bye, bye, mamma! (ANDRÉS and JUAN JOSÉ go out at the back.)

SCENE 6.

The TAVERNKEEPER and ISIDRA

Isidra (Meaning JUAN JOSÉ and ANDRÉS).—Reprobates! . . . And just because Juan José imagines I am advising Rosa wrong. (To the TAVERNKEEPER)

Tavernkeeper.—Aren't you? (Slyly.)

Isidra (With an air of innocence).—God forbid! . . . You know me, Manuel.

Tavernkeeper.—Because I know you, I don't believe you.

Isidra.—Don't you?

Tavernkeeper.—Listen to me, Señá Isidra: I don't meddle with a customer's business because I oughtn't to, and because anybody who comes into my place to drop a piece of money is sacred for me. I can hear, and see, and keep still, and respect each one, for that's my trade and business, but don't try any foolishness on me. It won't go here.

Isidra.—I? . . .

Tavernkeeper.—Get down to brass tacks. Ever since Paco moved into this street and met Rosa, what has Paco done but hang around Rosa, and what have you done but praise up Paco to Rosa?

Isidra.—Am I to blame if people take my good intentions wrong?

Tavernkeeper (*With a tone of incredulity*).—Good intentions? You?

Isidra.—Of course! Paco is a great chance and I hate to see Rosa pass him up. That's true; just as true as it is that I have never said a word about her loving or not loving Juan José. What has one got to do with the other?

Tavernkeeper.—A fine excuse! . . . You thought Juan José was going to stand for it!

Isidra.—He wouldn't be the first. (*The door at the back opens and PACO comes in followed by two women and two men. The men wear capes and broad hats; the women have silk handkerchiefs on their heads, and wear long fringed shawls.*)

Paco (*At the door*).—Inside! . . . Now you'll see if I am right! (*The two men and the two women come in.*)

SCENE 7

ISIDRA, PACO, the TAVERNKEEPER, TWO WOMEN, TWO MEN, then the WAITER

Tavernkeeper (*Turning to PACO with the obsequiousness befitting a tavernkeeper when a good customer enters his house*).—Señor Paco! . . .

Paco.—Hello, Manuel! I've told these people that you have the best glass of wine in this quarter; fill 'em up so they can find out.

Tavernkeeper (*Filling glasses and putting them on the shelf of the bar*).—These are mine.

Paco (*To Isidra*).—What are you drinking?

Isidra.—Brandy. (*The TAVERNKEEPER serves ISIDRA; the rest drain their glasses.*)

Paco (*To those who accompany him*).—How is it?

First Woman.—Great!

Paco (*To the Tavernkeeper*).—Fill 'em up again and have them prepare some rice with chicken and some chops. We'll have our supper here.

Tavernkeeper.—Boy! . . . (*The TAVERNKEEPER serves other glasses; the WAITER comes in from the left. To the WAITER.*) Go to the kitchen and tell them to prepare rice with chicken and some chops. They are for Señor

Paco; I say no more. Lay the table for them in that room.
(*The one on the right.* The WAITER goes out left.)

Paco (To the TAVERNKEEPER).—Have you a guitar?

Tavernkeeper (*Eager to please*).—For you we would get
one even if there wasn't any. In there. (*The room on the
right.*) You will find one and a good one.

Paco (To the Women).—Aren't you drinking?

First Woman.—Sure! (*Draining her glass.*)

Paco (To the TAVERNKEEPER).—Again! (*The TAVERN-
KEEPER fills more glasses.* PACO goes to the little table on the
left, in front of which ISIDRA has sat down. The WAITER
comes from the kitchen with a service of plates and table linen;
he crosses the stage and goes into the room on the right, which is
illuminated as though the gas had just been lighted. To
ISIDRA.) Have you seen her?

Isidra.—Yes.

Paco.—Well?

Isidra.—She is still a little stubborn; but leave her to
me, for she'll give in.

Paco.—If you help me, you won't regret it.

Isidra.—Help you? . . . With heart and soul.
People always help a swell and elegant fellow like you. I
don't do it for money, God knows; I do it because I've taken
a fancy to you.

Paco.—If I could speak to her alone; but I never get a
chance; she spends the day in the factory; she leaves with
Toñuela; and, as soon as Juan José comes from work, he
never leaves her an instant.

Isidra.—Chance? . . . You may get one tonight.

Paco.—Tonight?

Isidra.—Rosa will come here and will come before he
does, because he has gone to attend to a piece of business,
and he's sure to be a little late. If during this time she is
left alone, you come out of the room, and you happen to
meet her, and . . . Believe me, Paco, with money and
swell manners you can go anywhere. (*The WAITER comes
out of the room on the right and goes to the bar.*)

Paco (To ISIDRA).—Will you have some supper?

Isidra.—Thanks, I've already had some. I'm on my
way to a neighbor's house to get her to loan me a few cents.
A small matter, a lack of about a dollar.

Paco (*Putting his hand in his vest pocket, and taking out*

some coins).—Here are two dollars, and be on hand if I need you.

Isidra (Takes the money and pockets it with an expression of great cupidity).—I would serve you on my knees, Paco!

Tavernkeeper (To PACO).—When you like, it's ready. (Meaning the room on the right.)

Paco (To those who accompany him).—Come on!

Tavernkeeper (Throwing wide open the door on the right).—Walk in. (The two men and the two women go into the room on the right.)

Paco (To the TAVERNKEEPER from the door on the right).—Send us a couple of dozen and a few olives to whet our appetites. (PACO goes into the room on the right, and the door closes after him.)

SCENE 8.

ISIDRA, THE TAVERNKEEPER, and the WAITER; later ROSA and TOÑUELA

Isidra (To the TAVERNKEEPER).—He's a stream of gold, Paco is!

Tavernkeeper (While he fills some glasses which he places on a tray and puts into a dish two or three ladles of olives, which he takes from a bottle on the bar).—And you are drinking freely from it. If only Juan José doesn't catch you and choke you.

Isidra.—I've been in worse pickles.

Tavernkeeper (To the WAITER).—Take this in. (The TAVERNKEEPER hands the WAITER the tray with the glasses and the dish of olives; the WAITER takes them into the room on the right, and returns immediately.—To ISIDRA.) Well, that's your business! I'm not going to burn my fingers. (The door at the back opens, and ROSA and TOÑUELA come in, dressed as factory girls; woolen shawls, blue aprons, short skirts, handkerchiefs on their heads, and blue sleeve-protectors on their arms.)

Toñuela (To ROSA).—Two weeks without work! . . . We're in a fix!

Rosa (With indifference and as if thinking of something else).—Sure we are. (To the TAVERNKEEPER.) Have they come?

Tavernkeeper.—They said I was to tell you to wait. They won't be long.

Isidra (Coming up to ROSA and TOÑUELA) —Hello, girls!

Tavernkeeper (To the WAITER, who has come from the room on the right).—Stay on watch. I'm going to take a turn through the kitchen. (Goes out left.)

SCENE 9

ROSA, ISIDRA, TOÑUELA and the WAITER

Toñuela (To ROSA).—Andrés will be in a sweet temper when he finds it out! . . .

Isidra.—What's going on?

Toñuela.—What do you suppose is going on, Señora! They've laid off half the girls in the factory, and we got the sack.

Isidra.—Heavens, woman!

Toñuela.—Two pesetas a day gone glimmering! . . . It can't be helped! We'll have to be patient!

Rosa.—Little I got! . . . Six reales is a huge sum—that's what my wages was—to be going it as tight as I can from seven in the morning!

Toñuela.—It's not so little. You can do a lot with six reales.

Isidra (Jestingly).—Build a palace, at least! . . .

Rosa (Laughing).—Yes! . . .

Toñuela.—Not so bad, for two weeks go by quick. I'm sorry for Andrés because he'll have to cut down on his wine.

Isidra.—It won't hurt him. You girls do too much by working for them and spoiling your hands for them.

Rosa (Looking at her hands, sadly and angrily).—Mine are in a nice state!

Toñuela.—When you're poor you have to work hard. The money that I earn to help Andrés is sweet to me. Don't you feel the same way about it? (To ROSA.)

Rosa (Displeased).—Yes, of course I do.

Isidra (Scornfully).—Work yourself to death for a man!

Toñuela.—If you love him and if he's hard up, you like to do it.

Rosa.—Love him! . . .

Isidra.—Don't talk of love. Love is over some day. No one could compete with me, if I was young and pretty as you two! . . . (To Rosa.) Gosh, girl! . . . I know women, not half as good looking as you, and they take life easy, and have whatever they like, and they are regular queens.

Rosa.—Indeed they are, and they do just as they want to and life doesn't worry them.

Toñuela.—As long as they have a pretty face. When that's gone, what becomes of them? Not even the dogs have any use for them.

Isidra.—What do you know about it? . . .

Toñuela.—A lot . . . I'd rather put up with Andrés, endure his poverty, stand his disposition, than pass through what others do, get old and be as you are, alone, without the love of a single person.

Isidra.—And why am I so? . . . Because I was a fool, and didn't follow good advice . . . and if you don't believe me, go ahead, trust men; love them for their benefit, undergo trials, and suffering and disappointment . . . then you'll see how they pay you for it!

Rosa (To *Toñuela*).—Señá Isidra is right about it. You slave for a man, spend your youth with him, work yourself to death for him, and when you least expect it, he gets tired of you, he turns you out, and "out of sight out of mind" . . . That's what happens.

Toñuela.—Not always. After all, every one does as he pleases. I'm going home to leave this bundle, (*One she has put on a stool when she came in.*) And get supper, for we are to have company tonight.

Isidra.—Company?

Rosa.—Yes, Juan José and me.

Toñuela.—For me it's just as though you were the King and Queen of Spain. (*She takes the bundle from the stool.* To *Rosa*.) Will you wait for me here?

Rosa.—All right.

Toñuela.—I'll be back in a jiffy. Poor Andrés! . . . I was so happy and now two weeks of suffering! . . . (*Throwing off her despondency.*) Oh, well! . . . God will provide. The sparrows earn less and they live. (*Goes out back stage.*)

SCENE IO

ROSA, ISIDRA, THE WAITER; finally PACO and his companions inside

Rosa (*Spitefully*. To *ISIDRA*, meaning *TOÑUELA*).—There she is, so happy and gay . . . It seems she drew the first prize in *Andrés*. How can she be gay with the life she leads?

Isidra.—Because she has been used to it all her life, and she wasn't born with a silver spoon in her mouth, and she knows nothing about comforts and pleasures, and leading men with the dough tied to the tail of her skirts . . . (*Scornfully*.) What does that beggar know about it! . . . (*With feigned compassion and affection, and taking ROSA's hands in hers*.) It's different with you, poor girl! You've changed a lot!. . . you're paying dearly for your whim.

Rosa (*Sadly*).—Indeed I am! . . . (*Spitefully*.) To find myself in this fix! Oh! Señá Isidra, every day I find this misery harder to bear! . . .

Isidra.—Naturally.

Rosa.—It's no use; it's impossible. I try; I'd like to but I can't! . . . Honestly, I don't really know what's happening to me. I'd give a finger to know what it is and explain it.

Isidra.—Suppose I explain it to you?

Rosa.—You . . .

Isidra.—I . . . In the first place, you imagine you love Juan José and you don't.

Rosa (*Surprised*).—Don't I? . . .

Isidra.—Oh, well, you do love him, but not with that love which makes you blind; which puts a bandage over your eyes.

Rosa.—I . . .

Isidra.—No, you don't love him like that. The proof is that you see what you lose by staying by him, and, as you're no fool, you realize your own worth, and you say "Am I going to put up with this?" And you won't put up with it, and you are right.

Rosa.—Put up with it!

Isidra.—Mercy, no! . . . It's a shame you are as you are. And for whom? For a . . . That's what he is anyhow.

Rosa (*In a burst of feminine vanity*).—Not that; Juan José is a fine fellow.

Isidra.—On Sunday, when he washes and gets the lime off of his face. The other days, no one can tell what he is. And what if he is a fine fellow! . . . There are others just as fine who are crazy about you, and wouldn't make you work and suffer. Good Lord, there's no excuse for you! . . . If I was in your skin . . .

Rosa.—Señá Isidra, what can I do, except what I am doing? How am I going to leave him, if he doesn't give me a reason, and he is dead in love with me, and he is good to me, and whatever he earns is mine? I can only be grateful to him and bear it.

Isidra.—And die of gratitude in a corner.

Rosa.—It's . . .

Isidra (*Interrupting her*).—Gratitude, yes. Because that's all you've got for him. Do you think I'm a fool? . . . Not at all; I know some one that you don't dislike, and who has been interesting you gradually and fixing himself in your thoughts. (*As if answering a negative gesture from Rosa.*) Don't shake your head, because it's so. Do you want me to name him? Paco.

Rosa.—No, don't you believe it.

Isidra (*Interrupting her*).—Now he is a polished man, and a fine fellow, and ready for anything to please you. Only you, with your offishness, and your scruples will finally bore him and cause him to get tired of you.

Rosa (*Proudly*).—Get tired! . . . You bet he won't. How I wish he would!

Isidra.—No you don't, and perhaps, when you come to feel kindly toward him, he won't even remember your name.

Rosa.—Oh, no! Paco will be just as he is today, just as long as I please. I don't like to be conceited and boast, but I'll tell you one thing: like this, poorly dressed and with this face of mine, and without bragging, wherever Paco is and I appear, there is only one woman, I.

Isidra (*Affectionately*).—How vain you are! (*There is heard in the room on the right the strumming of a guitar, accompanied by the clapping of hands and the patting of feet.*

Rosa.—Is there music inside? (*A man's voice inside strikes up a "malagueña."*) Similar to a fandango.)

Isidra.—It is . . .

Rosa (*Rising and going toward the right*).—Listen, he's going to sing.

A Man's Voice (*Inside, singing, accompanied by a guitar*).

I can not live without thee;
Without thee, I scarce exist.
Vain hope in thee means more to me,
Than to wander where I list,
Hither, thither, fancy free.

Voices (*Inside*).—Bravo! Fine! Bravo!

Rosa (*Gleefully*).—Bravo! (*To ISIDRA*.) How very well done!

Isidra (*To ROSA*).—You see? You can't help it. It sets you all a-tingle. You'd like to go in and do a verse.

Rosa.—You bet! . . .

Isidra (*Slowly, and with a roguish gesture*).—Now I think of it . . . Well, I forgot! . . . I'll bet you can't guess who's in there?

Rosa.—Who?

Isidra.—Paco. He came with some friends and two very pretty ladies. (*Emphasizing her words*.)

Rosa.—Did he? (*With ill-concealed pique*.)

Isidra.—Really pretty! (*Insidiously*.) Maybe he thinks, “one nail drives out another.”

Rosa.—He's furious because I won't even look at him. (*The door on the right opens, and PACO comes out*.)

Paco (*At the door. To the WAITER*).—Boy! . . .

Wine! . . . (*As if discovering ROSA*.) Is it you, neighbor? (*Going to her*.)

Rosa.—As you see.

Paco.—And you are as fine a girl as ever.

Rosa.—As I haven't changed. (*The WAITER fills the tray with glasses and carries it to the room on the right. ISIDRA retires to the background*.)

SCENE II

ROSA, ISIDRA and PACO; later the WAITER

Paco (To ROSA).—Will you join us?

Rosa.—Thank you. (Slightly piqued.) I don't want to keep you. The party might not like it.

Paco.—That's a grave concern for me! If I could be, as I am now, with you, a hundred years would seem a minute.

Rosa.—A hundred years! . . . (Ironically.) You could find the ladies who are with you bald-headed when you returned.

Paco.—I don't care if their hair does fall out. (The WAITER comes from the room on the right with a tray of half-rained glasses; he goes to the bar with them and empties what is left in them into the jar.)

Rosa (To PACO).—Go along, for they are waiting for you; go to them and have a good time.

Paco.—Have a good time! . . . I have a good time, Rosa!

Rosa (With irony).—Has some misfortune happened to you?

Paco.—The greatest of all; I'm suffering on account of a woman who doesn't care a straw for me.

Rosa.—How terrible of her! . . . And who is she? One of the ladies inside?

Paco.—Don't make fun of me. No one came with me. Those women came with two friends of mine and are there because they invited them. So far as I am concerned, they might as well not be there.

Rosa.—Ah, come off! . . .

Paco.—The person for whom I'm suffering is not in that room; you know that, and if either of those women worry you, say so, and out she goes into the street, and if I worry you, I'll go away, because wherever I am, and you appear, you are the mistress, the one who commands, who orders, and here am I to say so, and I haven't gone away.

Rosa.—Thanks, Paco. (She turns on ISIDRA a look of triumph and satisfied vanity.) I didn't expect so much. (After a short pause, and as if she wished to change the conversation.) Say, that malagueña a while ago was mighty well done.

Paco.—It isn't so bad, but in comparison with you! . . .
Really you sing divinely!

Rosa (*With mixed feelings of satisfaction and shyness.*)—
You're stringing me!

Paco.—As though it were today, I recall the first time I heard you sing. I carry the verse in my heart, and I should give anything you might ask to hear it again.

Rosa.—Don't be a *romancer*, Paco. One would think you had never heard anything better.

Paco.—Nonsense! And now that I think of it, why don't you go in and sing us a *malagueña*?

Rosa.—I?

Paco.—Do me this favor.

Rosa.—I'd like to, but it is impossible.

Paco.—Why?

Rosa.—I'm waiting for Juan José; he's dead against having me going around and accepting invitations from other men. He might get mad.

Paco.—Get mad! If I were just anybody, his anger would be understood. But with me, there's no reason for it.

Rosa.—Of course, you're his boss, and Juan José must look to you for the little that he earns, but . . .

Paco.—But, what?

Rosa.—I can't; really, I can't. He has a temper, and if he takes it wrong . . .

Paco.—He won't. It only takes a minute and if he comes during that minute, let him come in and drink a glass, often, or forty; you and he may stay as long as you like and go home when you please. (*With affectionate insistence, and as if trying to overcome Rosa's indecision.*) Come, do something for me, once in your life, though it's only singing a song . . .

(To ISIDRA, who has remained in the background near a table, sipping slowly a small glass of brandy.) Señá Isidra, help me convince her.

Isidra (*Coming up*).—What is it?

Rosa.—Paco insists on hearing me sing a little; I don't dare favor him, because Juan José is coming and he might think any old thing, and make trouble for me.

Isidra.—There is no reason for Juan José being put out among friends an invitation is accepted, for we are not savages who slight people.

Rosa.—I . . .

Isidra.—Run along, girl, run along; and don't make him
eg you so much.

Rosa.—I'll go. (To Paco). I warn you that I'll only
ng two verses, and leave.

Paco.—As you like. Inside that door you are queen.
To ISIDRA.) Are you coming?

Isidra.—I'm going to bed.

Paco (Opening the door on the right.)—Go in first, my
Divinity. (ROSA and PACO go into the room on the right, and
the door closes behind them.)

SCENE 12

SIDRA, the WAITER, soon the TAVERNKEEPER, later, JUAN
José and Andrés

Isidra (To the WAITER).—Give me another glass, for I
want to sleep sound. (The TAVERNKEEPER appears left
and hears ISIDRA.)

Tavernkeeper (To the WAITER).—I'll serve her. Go to
the kitchen, and when they dish up the rice, bring it. (The
WAITER goes into the room on the left. To ISIDRA.) Still here?
JUAN JOSÉ and ANDRÉS, at the door in the back.)

Andrés.—I'm tuned up. Tonight I'm going to raise
 Cain. To JUAN JOSÉ.) I said I was, and it wouldn't
o for a man to fail to keep his word. I'll do it even if that
ttle matter isn't settled.

Juan José.—Another whim. (Noting ROSA's absence.
Hasn't she come yet?)

Isidra (Aside).—The other one! I'll clear out. (Aloud.
To the TAVERNKEEPER.) See you tomorrow. (Going to
the back of the stage.)

Andrés.—Going, old bird?

Isidra.—To my nest to sleep.

Andrés.—How's that? Isn't now the very time for owls?
ISIDRA shrugs her shoulders and goes out at the back without
plying.)

SCENE 13

JUAN JOSÉ, ANDRÉS, and the TAVERNKEEPER, finally TOÑUELA

Andrés (To the TAVERNKEEPER).—And those girls! Haven't they come?

Tavernkeeper.—Some time ago. I left them here with Señá Isidra, when I went to the kitchen.

Juan José.—Where have they gone? (*To the TAVERNKEEPER.*) Don't you know?

Tavernkeeper.—No.

Andrés.—To my house; to prepare the stew. Don't be impatient. You'll see them coming back before I want them to! Just think; it's Saturday and they are late when they know we have money in our pockets! If it were Monday!

Juan José.—We'll go to the house.

Andrés.—You're awfully in a hurry. There's no need to go and look for them. (*Seeing TOÑUELA come in at the back.*) Are you convinced? There's Toñuela.

Toñuela (Going to ANDRÉS).—Am I late?

SCENE 14

TOÑUELA, JUAN JOSÉ, ANDRÉS and the TAVERNKEEPER
inside, PACO, ROSA, the TWO MEN and the TWO WOMEN

Andrés.—Late! Of course not. You are a regular chronometer for shutting off my drink! Today is the only time you've been late, dearie! I've already taken on a few.

Toñuela.—There's no use to say so, anybody can see it sot.

Andrés.—You honor me. (*He goes to TOÑUELA and puts his hand affectionately on her shoulder.*)

Toñuela (Repulsing him also affectionately).—Go away! I'm not in any mood for fooling. (*To JUAN JOSÉ.*) And Rosa?

Juan José (Surprised).—Didn't she go up with you?

Toñuela.—No; I left her here.

Juan José.—Here! . . . Where could she have gone? (*The strumming of a guitar is again heard inside.*)

Andrés (To the TAVERNKEEPER).—Have you a party on? Voices (Inside).—Bravo! . . . Let's hear her . . . (A woman's voice within sings the opening bars of a malagueña.)

Juan José.—What! . . . (To ANDRÉS.) Isn't that Rosa's voice? . . . (He moves to the right; when he hears the beginning of the verse, he stops.)

Rosa (Singing, inside.)—

Dear companion of my heart,
See them talk, though naught they know;
Not one glance I cast at thee,
Yet they tattling, whispering, go.

Voices (Inside).—Bravo! Bravo!

Juan José (Who, followed by ANDRÉS, has gone to the door on the right and looked through the opening in the curtain. To ANDRÉS).—It is she (Anxiously.) Who is with her? He looks again. Furiously.) Paco! . . . Do you see, Andrés! . . . She is singing for him! . . . He is making love to her! . . . And she is making eyes at him! . . . I swear their fun won't last long! (He violently opens the door on the right. JUAN JOSÉ says his last words while ROSA is singing; so that, when he opens the door of the room, the verse of the song stops abruptly at whatever word it may have reached.)

Tavernkeeper.—What's all this!

Juan José (At the door, and speaking at those inside).—Rosa! (Harshly.)

Paco (Inside).—Come in, Juan José.

Juan José. (Dryly).—No, señor. (As if he were talking to ROSA.) Did you hear? Come here! . . . Hurry up! . . . (Impatiently and angrily.)

Toñuela (Low. To ANDRÉS, referring to ROSA).—How foolish! (ROSA comes out of the door on the right.)

Rosa (To JUAN JOSÉ).—Here I am. (Noting the angry expression of JUAN JOSÉ.) What's the matter with you?

Juan José (Taking ROSA roughly by the wrist, and dragging her to the front of the stage).—What's the matter with me! . . . And you, what were you doing in that room? . . . Haven't I told you, I don't want to see you with anybody, and least of all with him? (PACO comes out of the

door on the right, and, behind him, the two women and the two men.)

SCENE 15

ROSA, TOÑUELA, JUAN JOSÉ, PACO, ANDRÉS, the TAVERNER
KEEPER, the Two Men and the Two Women

Paco (Addressing JUAN JOSÉ).—What's the matter, Juan José?

Juan José (Gruffly).—You see plain enough. I'm taking Rosa out of there, because such is my pleasure; I don't believe there is any one to prevent me.

Paco.—Are you mad because I asked Rosa to join us? It's my fault; I saw her come in and I invited her to be agreeable.

Rosa (To JUAN JOSÉ).—I didn't want to do it. He insisted.

Paco.—It doesn't seem to me that a friend offends when he invites the woman of another.

Juan José.—A friend, no.

Paco.—Then . . .

Juan José.—But, are you a friend of mine?

Paco (Surprised).—What's that?

Juan José.—The man who makes love to the woman that's living with you, and tries to take her away from you isn't your friend.

Andrés.—Juan José! . . .

Juan José.—I'm tired of beating about the bush.

Paco.—What are you saying?

Juan José.—What you know as well as I; that Rosa strikes you as fine for your amusement; and that I must seem of very small importance to you, when you dare cast your eyes on her.

Tavernkeeper (To PACO).—Pay no attention to him.

Rosa (As if frightened).—Oh, Lord! . . .

Toñuela.—You're to blame.

Paco.—He's crazy.

Juan José.—I am not crazy. I've been watching you for a long time, and, for a long time, I've known that, claiming to be my friend, you've been trying to rob me of what is dearest to me in this world; I know it. And, as we must

some time put all the cards on the table, I did what I did, and I'm saying what I say.

Andrés (To JUAN JOSÉ).—Be careful! . . .

Paco (To JUAN JOSÉ).—Well, what you say is wrong, and you try my patience, and you forget who I am.

Juan José.—I do not forget. You are my boss, the one who gives me the daily wages with which I eat, the one who commands me and these arms of mine from dawn till dark. It's plain I do not forget. Maybe for that reason, because you pay me, you have come to believe that everything of mine belongs to you, and, not satisfied with being well dressed at the cost of my blood, you want to command in here, too, to take what lives in here and carry it off. Well, you can't, no, Señor Paco, you can't! . . .

Paco (Angrily).—Mind what you are saying!

Juan José.—I say, poor, yes, but not that poor. My sweat, all right; my labor, all right, too; they are yours because you pay for them. (*Seizing ROSA by the arm and drawing her to him.*) But this is not bought with money; there isn't enough money in the world to buy it. This is my life, my soul; it belongs to me and I will not let go.

Tavernkeeper (To JUAN JOSÉ).—Don't start a row in my house.

Paco (To JUAN JOSÉ).—Finish your insult, because my patience is at an end. (*Advancing towards JUAN JOSÉ; the men who accompany PACO make a move as if to follow him.*)

Andrés (Placing himself between those who advance).—Easy, let the two settle it.

Paco (To JUAN JOSÉ).—So you are looking for a fight?

Juan José.—I'm not looking for anything; I'm saying what I must say; and I'll take the consequences. (*Forcefully.*)

Paco (Angrily).—I'm tempted to answer that you are right; that I do love her; that I am no good, if I don't take her away from you, right before your eyes. (*He tries to move towards JUAN JOSÉ; those with him stop him.*)

Juan José (Advancing at the same time as PACO).—Take her away from me! . . . (*He stops as if repressing his anger.* To the men who are restraining PACO. (Don't hold him. (*To PACO.*) Try it. Let's go into the street. (*Speaking to ROSA.*) Go out first, and go out quietly, and walk Slow. Go.

Toñuela.—I'll go . . . (Starting to accompany ROSA, who is moving towards the back of the stage.)

Juan José (To TOÑUELA).—I said alone. (To PACO.) That woman is mine, the one I love; and I love her for myself alone, myself! (ROSA opens the door at the back, and goes out.) Is there any one who wants to take her away from me? Let him try it! . . . She is going out alone. Let him that wants her go after her. But let him not forget that he must go out through this door; (*the one in the back*) and that in this door am I. (The position of the actors is as follows: JUAN JOSÉ in the back; PACO in the foreground, held by the men and women who accompany him. The TAVERNKEEPER beside PACO; ANDRÉS near JUAN JOSÉ; TOÑUELA beside ANDRÉS.

End of Act I

ACT II

The stage represents the interior of the house where ROSA and JUAN JOSÉ live; a door at the back, which is supposed to open on the street; one on the right, another on the left.

In the foreground, at the right, a pine dresser, painted, rickety, and repaired in many places. On the dresser are two porcelain vases with paper flowers; a clay statue, a table lamp of tin, with a green paper shade. Stuck on the wall, above the dresser, a newspaper of the bull ring with the portrait of a bull-fighter; a low pine table, three or four Vitoria chairs, in bad repair, and a small wooden bench complete the furnishings of the room. Pasted on the two panels in the back, two illustrated numbers of "La Lidia."* On the left a hand mirror, hanging from a nail. On the right, an iron brazier, with a fender, and without fire, half-filled with ashes.

When the curtain goes up, there are seen on the stage ROSA, ISIDRA and TOÑUELA. TOÑUELA and ROSA, seated in the foreground near the table. ISIDRA, standing, near the door in the back, as if she had just entered.

*A well-known Madrid publication dealing with the bull fight.

SCENE I

ROSA, TOÑUELA and ISIDRA

Isidra (*Rubbing her hands*).—My, it's cold! . . . The birds in the street are frozen stiff! There's more than eight inches of snow; and it's as hard as marble . . . (*Approaching the brazier and stirring the ashes with a shovel.* To Rosa.) Haven't you any fire?

Rosa (*With bitter irony*).—Fire! . . . May God send some! . . . Of course not, since it's absolutely necessary! . . . The cooking stove doesn't need any, because it is orphaned of food and I! . . . A person getting used to not eating, might as well get used to shivering.

Toñuela.—Misfortunes never come singly. It seems a curse has fallen on us! First we girls, then next Juan José without work, and Friday, Andrés. (*To Isidra.*) I tell you it's enough to make you tear your hair!

Isidra.—I should think so!

Toñuela.—Thank the Lord Andrés has his mother's house!

Isidra (*To Rosa*).—What a two weeks you're spending!

Rosa.—And worse and worse. (*Desperately.*)

Isidra (*With feigned affection*).—Don't fret! . . . I love you like a daughter, and I won't allow you to be uncomfortable while I can help it. I've put a pan of noodle soup on my stove and a half-basket of slack in the brazier. You will come and eat the soup when it is done, and I'll take your brazier with me and put into it half the coals from mine, and bring you a little heat. (*Starting to take the brazier.*)

Rosa.—Leave it alone!

Isidra.—Leave it, the idea! . . . (*Snatching up the brazier.*) I'll be right back! . . . (*Goes out at the back.* It is beginning to grow dark.)

SCENE 2

ROSA and TOÑUELA

Rosa (*Meaning Isidra*).—How kind she is! . . .

Toñuela.—There are kindnesses which cause fear! Señá Isidra's is of that sort!

Rosa (Reproachfully).—Are you going to find fault with the poor woman?

Toñuela.—Yes, I am, because that old woman is the same as the weevil; wherever she goes, she does damage.

Rosa.—How you talk!

Toñuela.—She makes a mistake in coming to your house. Some fine day Juan José will kick her out.

Rosa.—He has no reason to.

Toñuela.—Do you expect me to swallow that?

Rosa.—I don't expect you to swallow anything. You are seeing things where there aren't any. (*ISIDRA comes in in at the back, with the brazier resting on her hip, held with her right hand, and a bottle of oil in her left. As she comes in, she leaves the bottle on the dresser.*)

SCENE 3

ISIDRA, ROSA and TOÑUELA. Finally IGNACIO and ANDRÉS

Isidra (Setting the brazier on the floor).—Here's the brazier! . . . And it's a blessing the way it heats! . . . Draw up, girls, draw up! (*ROSA and TOÑUELA draw up to the brazier.*)

Rosa (Putting her hands near the fire).—I feel better!

Isidra.—I also brought a little oil; the nights are long and a body is very sad in the dark.

Rosa (Gratefully).—Dear me! . . . How can I pay you? . . .

Isidra.—Oh, you'll pay me, child; you'll pay me. This old world wags on. (*Noting that ROSA starts to get up to trim the lamp, she stops her.*) I'll do it. Warm yourself for you certainly need it. (*ISIDRA goes to the dresser and continues the conversation while she trims the lamp and lights it. ROSA sits down again.*)

Rosa (Desperately).—What a life! Holy Mary, what a life! . . .

Isidra.—Just think the mean disposition of your man brought all this about! . . .

Toñuela.—That is not so.

Rosa.—Do you defend him?

Toñuela.—Why, of course. If he saw you with some one who makes him jealous, what was he going to do? If I had dared go as far as you did, Andrés would have behaved just as Juan José did; I would love him more after that, and I would bear anything cheerfully, when I knew that he staked his life and his bread that other eyes than his might not look upon me as his do.

Isidra (*With irony*).—Would you?

Toñuela.—He wasn't my man, and I tingled with pride when I saw him plant himself before the door and say: "Let him that wants her go out and get her!" And the other fellow didn't go out; of course, he didn't; and he was right. If he had started out, he would never have got past the door. There was in Juan José's face something which spoke and which said: "If any one dares try it, I'll kill him."

Isidra.—Shut up, shut up! You must have spent years reading those stories that are pushed in under the door for five *céntimos* a volume!

Toñuela.—I can't read.

Isidra.—No one would say it; you're just like one of the characters that appear in those books . . . It's all right for a person to fire up when there are grounds . . . That night, there weren't any.

Rosa.—That's what I say. Paco invited me out of kindness. If Juan José hadn't got hot-headed, we'd have been saved the row and the results, which are not slight.

Isidra.—Juan José spoiled everything.

Rosa.—And what happened? The next morning they gave him his time and put him off his job; for a week we've been dragging along with what there was in the house; now, that's gone. The wool in the mattress we've kept selling in handfuls; my two petticoats, the sheets, the comforter, and the half dozen shirts we had between us, are in the pawn shop; I haven't soaked his cape, because they won't take it; it serves as a blanket. Day before yesterday, I pawned my heavy shawl for ten *reales*; with them we've got on till today; and today, nothing, a piece of bread soaked in brandy, and waiting for manna; for I'm willing to have my head split with anything Juan José might bring.

Isidra.—Heavens, how dreadful!

Rosa.—I say, is there any one who can stand it! I can't!

Toñuela.—How you talk!

Rosa.—And that all this should happen because he wouldn't listen to reason!

Toñuela.—It happened because you are light in the upper story, and because you had to be singing where Paco was, and because you didn't call a halt soon enough.

Rosa.—I! . . .

Toñuela.—Juan José went too far when he believed what you said, and when he didn't break a bone or so for you. (*ANDRÉS and IGNACIO appear in the door at the back.*)

Rosa.—It would have been all right if he had struck me!

Toñuela.—I've got many a slap in the face for less.

Andrés (From the door).—And what a lot you will get!

. . . A slap at the proper time has more effect on you women than a sermon in Lent! . . . Come in, Ignacio. (*ANDRÉS and IGNACIO come in.*)

SCENE 4

ROSA, TOÑUELA, ISIDRA, ANDRÉS and IGNACIO

Ignacio (To Rosa).—Hasn't he come back?

Rosa.—No.

Andrés.—It's just as plain as though I saw it; he'll come back with his hands empty. Anyway, it's easy to find work. Are you fired one place? . . . Well, wait idly till you're called to another.

Ignacio.—It's not so easy for Juan José. You heard the contractor we talked to about him.

Rosa.—What did he say to you?

Andrés.—Well, he said: "Juan José is a good workman, but I can't give him work. You know what he did with Paco the other night? He shows a bad disposition and he has no respect for any one . . . "

Ignacio.—He has no respect? . . . Why do they say he has no respect? . . . Because he wouldn't allow his boss to make a monkey of him and make love to the woman who lives with him? . . . I'd have torn him to pieces.

Andrés.—He came very near it. I had hard work to hold him. (*To Rosa.*) You've put us in a tight hole!

Rosa.—I? . . . You don't say that I was to blame?

Andrés.—Well, who was? . . . The Man in the Moon?(*)

Rosa.—Where was I wrong? Because a man tells a woman he likes her eyes, have that man and woman been crooked? Did Paco get fresh with me? Did I let him get fresh? . . . Well, then! . . . Only Juan José, Toñuela, and you will have it that I am to blame, and here I have to put up with everything, privations, distrust . . . if some day I get tired and take to the street, you'll lay me out cold. (*Weeping rather from rage than emotion.*) By Jingo, I'd hate to, but I would!

Isidra.—Don't fret!

Toñuela.—Poor thing! It's not so bad as that!

Andrés.—Now tears! . . . All you women are alike. If we believe you, you are never to blame for anything. Without meaning any harm, you let men make love to you; you play one man against the other, as a joke; you laugh with the one who pays you compliments; you coddle him in front of the one who's in love with you; and some day, these two men, who've taken a dislike to each other, rush at each other, tongue-lash each other, whip out their knives, mix it. One is planted in the ground and the other, in jail; and you burst out crying, and say with an innocent face: "I'm not to blame! . . . Who would have thought it?" . . . Don't you?

Rosa (Angrily).—*Andrés!* . . .

Andrés.—If we make you jealous, you bristle up; if we warn you to be careful, you laugh at us; if we scold you, you get mad; if we beat you, you call us brutes . . . Brutes! . . . It's better to be a brute than . . . If men followed my advice, you women wouldn't fly so high!

Isidra (Low to Rosa).—What a fool!

Toñuela (To ANDRÉS).—Let up on her!

Rosa.—If Juan José heard you . . .

Toñuela.—Suppose he did hear him, what of it?

Andrés.—Perhaps he'd take her part, because when you

*The Spanish is *La Cibeles?* A reference to the fountain of the goddess Cybele in Madrid, meaning here some one impossible.

interfere between a man and a woman, you're a goner. I know that mighty well.

Ignacio.—You?

Andrés.—From experience; and it happened not three weeks ago.

Toñuela.—What happened?

Andrés.—I'll tell you. I was going down Embajadores Street, and where it turns into the ravine, I saw a man giving his wife, or whatever she was, a dickens of a beating. I don't mind seeing the women get their clothes dusted, but that citizen was hitting so hard, and she was letting out such howls, that I got sorry for her, and rushed in between them, and grabbed the man's hand, and said: "Pal, that's enough! That's more than a beast could stand." The guy was reasonable and stopped. But, she! . . . You ought to have seen her! . . . She put her hands on her hips, came at me, stuck her face up to mine, like she was going to swallow me, and showered this on me: "What difference does it make to you, if he beats me, you idiot? . . . He's my husband, ain't he?" Well, if I hadn't been careful, she'd have hit me.

Ignacio.—And what did you do?

Andrés.—Guess! . . . I yelled to the other fellow: "Keep it up till you get tired, old man!" And I went on down the ravine, swearing never, never, to interfere in family fights.

Isidra.—You soon forgot your oath.

Andrés.—Because it's Juan José . . . Juan José is a friend and I don't want him, nor her, (*meaning Rosa*) to be sorry. (*Approaching Rosa.*) Stop your sniveling!

Isidra (*To Rosa*).—Of course; don't cry, and don't pay any attention to him.

Andrés.—Listen to her, because it'll be better for you!

Ignacio.—Stop it; no more foolishness . . . (*To ANDRÉS.*) Since Juan José is late, we'll go down to the tavern. Enrique ought to be there with word about whether there is work or not in that town.

Andrés.—God grant there is, for we're all at the end of our rope! (*To Rosa.*) When he comes, tell him we are waiting down there.

Ignacio (*To ANDRÉS*).—Come on.

Andrés (To Toñuela).—You go and fix up a little, and be ready when I come home.

Rosa (To Andrés).—Are you going to eat supper at your mother's?

Andrés.—If we don't eat there, we don't eat. We have our choice. So long. (*Toñuela, Andrés, and Ignacio go out at the back, she through the right hand door, they, through the left.*)

SCENE 5

ROSA and ISIDRA

Isidra.—You see?

Rosa.—Yes, señora, I see; I agree with you. It's too much!

Isidra.—To be sure.

Rosa.—I can't stand any more! . . . I can't! . . . If Juan José doesn't behave better, if he doesn't get work, if they all keep on harping about the other fellow, I know what I'll do.

Isidra.—Behave better! . . . That's it! . . . If he had, you'd be dancing to another tune! Do you think that if he had talked decent to Paco, if he had come down off his high horse even a little, that Paco would have thrown him out of work? . . . Not a bit of it . . . Paco is not bad; of course, he's not. He has a heart of gold, and for you, he would pull the moon out of the sky, if it would please you.

Rosa.—He? . . .

Isidra.—He suffers more than you do, just from seeing you suffer. Here's what he said: "I should give my very blood that Rosa might not want for anything; but if she scorns me and prefers troubles and ill-treatment with him, to comfort and ease with me, she'll have to make the best of it, while I bite my nails with rage! But because I rage, we'll all rage."

Rosa.—He won't go that far!

Isidra.—He won't? . . . Besides you know how in love with you he is. It's pitiful to see how he suffers on your account! . . . Poor man! So polished! So nice,

and with lots of bills in his pocket book! It's too bad for you, because you might as well be right now in a good house with a heavy shawl wrapped about your shoulders, and with diamond trimmings on your ears, and four or five rings on those heavenly hands!

Rosa (Sighing).—Ah!

Isidra.—What a couple you'd make! . . . I don't need to speak of you; and he! . . . You won't deny that Paco is a fine fellow!

Rosa.—Why, I don't deny it! . . .

Isidra.—Because you do like him better than the other one; and you'd get out of your hard straights . . . I don't know what you expect . . .

Rosa.—I! (*As if hesitating. With a tone of incredulity.*) I can't make up my mind, Señá Isidra. I can't make up my mind.

Isidra.—You're making a mistake. Do you know what Paco said to me this morning?

Rosa.—What?

Isidra.—Well, he said to me: "Go and see Rosa; ask her if I can talk to her; and tell her if she loves me, I'll do anything she asks, and no one shall dare touch her, for I am ready for everything, and no one can bluff me."

Rosa.—Did he say that to you?

Isidra.—Just as you hear. Well, you'll see.

Rosa.—Talk to him! . . . (*As if hesitating.*)

Isidra.—And it must be today. Paco is absolutely at the end of his patience. He'll come to see me right away to find out your answer. I, too, must have you decide one way or the other, because I risk having Juan José pick a quarrel with me. He's mighty leery of me, and he'll be more so when he sees me talking with the other fellow, and going in and out of your house so often.

Rosa.—But . . .

Isidra.—Don't be silly! . . . By talking with Paco, you don't bind yourself . . . You'll talk with him, you'll hear what . . .

Rosa (Looking towards the door in the back).—Ssh! . . . Juan José. (*JUAN JOSÉ appears at the back and stops.*)

SCENE 6

Rosa, Isidra, Juan José

Juan José (*At the door. Dejectedly*).—Nothing! . . . Nothing! . . . It seems the ice of the street has got into men's hearts, so hard and cold they are toward me. (*He advances toward Rosa, who is staring at him inquisitively.*) What are you looking at me for? . . . You can guess. There is no work; I can't find any anywhere, anywhere! . . . What's the use of having a strong will, strong arms and knowing your trade? . . . What's the use? . . . As if work were a charity to be refused! . . . Well, that is all it takes to drive a man to starvation or begging! Is there any justice in it? . . . And if there isn't, why does it happen? . . . Then they wonder why men rob and kill! . . . What are they going to do! (*He drops into a chair beside the table in an attitude of despair, hiding his face in his hands.*)

Isidra.—Be calm, come warm yourself a little, for it's awfully cold out doors.

Juan José (*Raising his head with bitter surprise*).—Warm myself . . . Where? . . . (*Noting the lighted brazier. To Rosa.*) What? You have a fire?

Rosa.—Thanks to Señá Isidra who brought me a few coals.

Juan José (*To ISIDRA. With bitter irony*).—Ah! So you're the guardian angel who took pity on us? And who gave you the money to do this deed of charity?

Isidra.—What did you say?

Juan José.—That you have never taken pity on anyone without good reason.

Isidra.—Juan José . . . (*As if offended.*)

Juan José.—You are very fond of this house. Especially when I'm not in it.

Rosa (*Reproachfully*).—Are you going to be ugly to the poor woman, after what she has done for me? . . .

Juan José.—For you! . . . (*Sarcastically.*) Señá Isidra is very kind, very kind! . . . Sure she is for she is only anxious for your comfort, and, when she sees you haven't found it with me, she is going to secure it for you with another. With Paco!

Rosa.—Don't talk like that.

Juan José (*To Isidra*).—Do you think I don't know your game? I know what's going on in this street. I know just as well why Paco talks to you, as I do why you come to my house.

Isidra.—You're mistaken; I swear that . . .

Juan José.—Don't swear to a lie. You are in cahoots with the other fellow to dupe me, persuade this girl, and this is not a bad time. Both of you know that we are at the end of our rope, that hard luck has its thumb on our throats, and you think she'll give in, that I'll look the other way, because hunger gives bad advice to love, and misery leads honor astray; you two imagine this, and he is patiently, hopefully, waiting, while you help him and come here to rob us of the only thing we have left, a little love! . . . But he's mistaken and you're mistaken. I don't know how Rosa feels or will feel; I . . . There is something which hunger will not make me sell, self-respect.

Isidra (*To Rosa*).—Do you see how suspicious he is, my dear? (*To JUAN JOSÉ*.) Do you think me capable of helping her with evil intent? (*As if angry and surprised*.) Merciful Heaven! . . . You're out of your head.

Rosa (*To JUAN JOSÉ*).—How can you insult her, when she comes to give all her slim cupboard can spare?

Juan José.—Don't take her part. You see I'm trying not to doubt you, and, if you take her part, I will doubt. (*Menacingly*. *To Isidra*.) You! . . . I have already told you: I don't want anything from you. I ask only one favor from you; get out of this house, and don't ever think of putting your foot in it again.

Isidra.—You order me out of your house!

Juan José.—Yes, I order you.

Rosa.—But . . .

Juan José.—Didn't I tell you to keep still! . . . (*To ISIDRA*.) I want nothing from you, I repeat it; neither the food you offer me, and it would lodge in my throat before I could swallow it; nor this damned fire (*He kicks the brazier, so that it turns part way over, and most of the coals spill on the floor*.) which makes my face burn, and chills my heart more than the snow outside chills my body. (*Advancing towards ISIDRA*.) I want nothing, nothing but never to see you; so

on your way and be quick about it, or I'll take you by the scruff of the neck and throw you out bodily! . . .

Isidra (Frightened).—Stop, man, stop! . . . I'm going. (*Retreating to the door, where she stops, shrugs her shoulders, and says to JUAN José*) You'll be sorry! (*ISIDRA goes out back.*)

SCENE 7

Rosa and Juan José

Juan José (Scornfully).—Sorry! . . .

Rosa (Vexed).—You won't be sorry, there's no chance. It'd be the first time you got sorry for your hot-headedness!

Juan José (Surprised).—My hot-headedness! Was I wrong to fire her out?

Rosa (Ironically).—Oh, no! You did just right! . . . Why did Señá Isidra come? To offer me a bowl of noodles and bring me a shovel of coals. The idea of offering us that, for we've got a half a lamb in the kitchen and a hundred weight of coke in the fireplace! It's an insult! You were very wise! She ought to be hanged for it!

Juan José.—Are you blind, or are you making fun of me! (*Peevishly.*) Don't you understand yet how that woman was ferreting out your secrets? (*Suspiciously.*) Have you made up your mind not to understand?

Rosa.—As she has said nothing bad to me, I must think nothing bad of her. (*Displeased.*)

Juan José.—Then you don't? . . . Then you claim she hasn't made any proposition? . . . Then you don't know what it is?

Rosa.—No. I only know that because of your suspicions and fears we are where we are.

Juan José (Vexed).—Rosa!

Rosa (Sarcastically).—Don't get mad. You've got what you were after. What more do you want, if you've had your own sweet way? If I starve, it doesn't matter.

Juan José.—But how am I going to act? Was I going to let Paco make love to you and not get mad, so as not to lose the wages he paid me? Am I, for a spoonful of soup, going to submit to the sneaking tricks of old Isidra? Am

I going to do that? . . . Did you think I was going to do that? . . . Do you want me to do it? . . . Speak, out with it right now!

Rosa.—I refer to what has happened: to the fact that your behaviour is leading us from bad to worse; and I ask you how long these misfortunes are going to last.

Juan José.—You . . .

Rosa.—No doubt you have some way of getting out of the mire, since you roar so loud. You have, haven't you?

Juan José.—No, I have none. None! . . . (*Desperately.*)

Rosa.—What are you waiting for then? For me, shut up in this room, to burn out like a lamp for want of oil? . . . Of course, as you men go in and out, there is always a friend to ask you to something or other. With that you keep up, and to Hell with the woman!

Juan José.—Why how you talk! . . . Don't you know that if any one gave me a piece of bread, that I'd bring that piece of bread straight to you without touching it? (*Passionately.*) Don't you understand what you mean to me? Don't you know that, from the moment I saw you, I've thought only of you, and you have had a free hand with all I've earned? When I looked at you, everything else ended for me. Friends, pleasures, even the glass of wine I used to take at the tavern when I came back from work! . . . Work for her, I said to myself, and in the heat, in the cold, with the wind cutting my flesh, or the sun scorching my skin, I sang on the scaffold, happier than ever, because that cold and that heat, and that constant grind, was my wages, the room where you live, your daily bread, your Sunday walk, the calico dress for your body, the woolen shawl for your shoulders, all of you that lived for me! . . . What did I care for weariness, work, and danger! . . . Imagine what it mattered to me to suffer during the day, if you were waiting for me at night! . . . There you have what I've done; what I'd do today, if I could; what I want to do . . . why, I'd even beg for you, for you, not myself! If I did not believe that you would be ashamed that my youth and these arms of mine were good for nothing except to send me out to beg on the streets! . . . And still you say you don't matter to me; that I leave you; that I neglect you! Don't say it, Rosa; don't say it! . . . For

you, I'll try everything, everything! . . . What do you want me to do? . . .

Rosa.—You ought to know. What can I tell you? . . . What do I know?

Juan José (Sadly and astonished).—You answer only that!

Rosa.—What do you expect me to answer, except that I haven't eaten since yesterday, and that tonight we'll freeze stiff in that horrid bed?

Juan José.—Do you think I can help it?

Rosa.—Do you think people can live this way?

Juan José.—Rosa! . . . (*Desperately.*)

Rosa (Acrimoniously).—No, they don't live this way! . . . They can't live this way.

Juan José.—And how can I help what is happening? . . . Don't I ask for work? . . . Don't I look for it? . . . Am I to blame, if I don't find it?

Rosa.—Am I?

Juan José (With astonishment and sorrow).—What do you mean by answering like this? Isn't my suffering enough without you making it more? . . . Are you bent on making me desperate?

Rosa.—I am bent on nothing; I am telling you how it is; I am holding it up before your eyes. You're the man and must decide, because I can't stand any more!

Juan José (Vexed).—You can't?

Rosa (Firmly).—No.

Juan José.—Have you forgotten that it's the woman's duty to suffer for the man that lives with her?

Rosa.—Have you forgotten that it's the man's duty to keep from starving the woman who lives with him?

Juan José (Vexed).—Oh! . . . That's too much!

Rosa (Dryly).—Yes, too much.

Juan José (After looking at ROSA a moment. Harshly, disillusioned.) Rosa, you're crooked!

Rosa (Brusquely).—I don't know what I am; but I have nothing, not the necessities, and I can't get along without them, because nobody can get along with nothing! If you don't bring them to me, I'll have to go out and look for them!

Juan José (With rage).—Look for them! . . . Did you say look for them? (*Coming up to ROSA and looking her*

full in the face. Furiously.) Let's see, repeat that, repeat that! . . . Come on, so I can hear!

Rosa.—What's the use to repeat it?

Juan José.—No! Really you don't have to repeat it with your tongue if you repeat it with your eyes, if your vile meaning shows in them! (*Seizing ROSA brutally by the arm.*) You're a wretch! . . . a wretch! . . .

Rosa.—Let go. You hurt! . . . (*With rage and pain.*)

Juan José (*Without releasing ROSA's arm.*).—Hurt! . . . You've hurt me worse and deeper! . . . (*Beside himself.*) You're a wretch, I repeat it. No; you don't deserve to be treated as I've treated you! . . . You've got to be treated in another way; like what you are, what you were when I met you! Like . . . like this! (*He raises his hand and strikes ROSA.* *TOÑUELA appears at the back.* *ROSA* struggles and disengages herself from *JUAN JOSÉ*, retreating towards the back. *JUAN JOSÉ* advances towards her and again raises his hands. *TOÑUELA* rushes in between them and seizes *JUAN JOSÉ's arm.*)

Toñuela.—What's this, Juan José?

SCENE 8

ROSA, TOÑUELA, and JUAN JOSÉ; then ANDRÉS

Juan José.—Don't hold me; let go! . . . (*To Toñuela.*)

Toñuela.—Have you gone crazy? . . . Are you going to beat her, after what the poor thing is suffering? (*Reproachfully.*)

Rosa (*Weeping*).—Let him beat me. It's clear he isn't satisfied with half starving me to death, and he wants to beat me to death. (*On hearing this JUAN JOSÉ draws back and drops his violent attitude.*)

Toñuela (*To JUAN JOSÉ*).—Stop. (*In a conciliatory tone.*) Gosh, you men are brutes! You see a woman strangling and then you put on the screws.

Juan José.—You don't know how she treated me!

Toñuela.—Do you think that any one can act nice when this (*The stomach*) is empty! (*ANDRÉS comes in at the back.*)

Rosa.—Strike me, a woman! . . . How brave! . . .
(She sinks into a chair.)

Andrés (To ROSA).—Did he wallop you? . . . (*To JUAN JOSÉ, as one who attaches no importance to what has happened.*) Enrique was down there.

Juan José.—And what does he say? . . . Is there work? (*Anxiously.*)

Andrés.—Later, when the days get longer, and you are paid the same and you work more.

Juan José.—And until then, what's going to become of us? (*Horrified.*)

Andrés (Sarcastically).—Whatever comes! What do we matter to them? We are dying of want? They should worry.

Juan José.—My God! . . . My God! . . . (*He drops dejectedly into a chair near the table.*)

Andrés.—Are you ready? (*To TOÑUELA.*)

Toñuela.—Yes.

Andrés.—Let's go to mother's. It's lucky she lives very near, otherwise we would freeze stiff on the way. It's awful cold! So we'll bolt the food and hurry home and go to bed. for that's where poor folks find shelter in the winter time. Fortune is very wise. Doesn't she give us enough to buy coal? Well, she gives us just enough to buy narrow beds, very narrow. One takes the place of the other.

Rosa (Sobbing).—No; I can't stand it!

Andrés (To ROSA).—Pshaw, girl; summer clouds! . . . Perhaps Juan José thought: when there's no flapjacks, slap-jacks are fine.

Juan José (Aside).—Rosa is right, she is. We can't go on this way..

Andrés (For JUAN JOSÉ).—Listen; I don't know what the old lady has cooked, but, whatever it is, we'll bring you a little.

Juan José.—Thanks, Andrés!

Andrés.—Thanks! . . . You're all right, old man!

Rosa (Low to TOÑUELA).—Don't go. He is a beast.
(Meaning JUAN JOSÉ.)

Toñuela.—Don't you see he's crying! Beasts don't cry.

Andrés (To TOÑUELA).—You go. (*Motioning her out with his hand, and making whatever pause the actor judges necessary.*)

Toñuela (To Rosa).—See you later. (To JUAN JOSÉ.) Don't you try it again! (ANDRÉS and TOÑUELA go out at the back. After a slight pause, during which ROSA remains seated with her back to JUAN JOSÉ, who is looking at her with an expression of love and anguish, he goes toward her, stops before coming up to her, and hesitates, as if he did not know how to break the silence.)

SCENE 9

ROSA and JUAN JOSÉ

Juan José (Gently).—Rosa! . . . (Seeing that she remains with her head in her hands without answering.) Rosa! (With a tone of entreaty.) Don't you answer me? . . . Look at me! . . . Won't you look at me? . . .

Rosa (As if she did not hear JUAN JOSÉ).—To come to this on his account, and for him to beat me, too! . . . That was all that was needed, and it has come! . . .

Juan José (Going around the chair and standing in front of ROSA). Listen! By what you prize most in the world, listen! . . . Take your hands from your face! (Seeing that ROSA doesn't do it, he removes them tenderly.) That's it. . . . So I can see you! So I can look at you! (Approaching his face to hers.)

Rosa (Leaning back without looking at JUAN JOSÉ).—Leave me alone! . . . Didn't you say I was crooked? . . . We give crooked people a wide berth. Leave me!

Juan José (Passionately).—Leave you! . . . Why everything I do is for fear of losing you! . . . Why I love you more than my very eyes! . . . Honestly, when I struck you, I felt it in here . . . (The heart.) Really it hurt me more than it did you! Do you know it hurt me more than it did you? . . .

Rosa.—I know you've abused me without any cause. What did I do for you to abuse me? When I have nothing, to whom am I to turn?

Juan José.—To me, ROSA, to me! I admit you're right. I behaved rotten. Forgive me . . . But you don't know what it is to be jealous of a woman who's more precious than the Virgin of the altar, and to have that thorn stuck in

your heart. I hope you'll never know! . . . It's a terrible pain, and when the spell comes on you, you don't know what you're doing. Your head buzzes, your eyes are bloodshot, you raise your fists without wanting to, something happens, and you can't help it, and then it's all over!

Rosa.—And because you have these spells and insist on suspicing me and some man, am I going to endure your fits and wait quietly till you happen to get suspicious again?

Juan José.—No, Rosa. I swear! I swear to you! . . . I don't doubt any more; I believe you . . . Tell me anything you like and I'll believe you! I need so much to believe in you! . . . (*Sadly and with affection.*)

Rosa.—If you need to, why do you insist on the opposite? Why instead of listening to me do you begin to pound me? . . . A fine way you have of fixing things and consoling a woman!

Juan José.—It's because you treated me so, and said such dreadful things to me!

Rosa.—Weren't they true? . . . What fault of mine is it, if the truth doesn't taste better?

Juan José.—Truth, yes, truth! All your words are truth. A truth which I say to myself every minute when I come in here and see you in despair; alone, barely existing on the charity of the neighbors; you, because I have dreamed what I have never dreamed before, of something that never has caused me any worry, of being rich, very rich, like those who ride in coaches! You, for whose comfort I'd pull up the paving stones with my teeth! . . . You, who suffer, who can't stand any more; because if this keeps up, if I don't bring what you need, you'll have to leave me, and you'll be right, because you weren't born to suffer and make a martyr of yourself! That's what I imagine, what I think, while the cold freezes the tears in my eyes . . . But when you say it to me, then I think I am nothing to you, you want to leave me, you don't love me, you love some one else, he's going to rob me of your affection, and my tears dry up, and I go crazy, and I want to kill you! . . . (*Desperately.*)

Rosa.—Hush; don't look like that! You scare me! (*Terrified.*)

Juan José.—Don't be scared, don't; I'm not going to

hurt you; that's just talk! . . . But we must talk of something else; of finding a way to remedy our misfortunes! I've got to stop your suffering. I've got to!

Rosa.—A way! What?

Juan José (*Decisively*).—One; any one! (*Stopping a moment as if thinking. After a pause, dejectedly.*) I don't find any! I don't find any! . . . I have no place to find any! . . . There is little work going on, just what is necessary, and there's more than enough labor; the other work hasn't opened up yet, and if you go to the contractors, to the owners, they answer: "Later on, when the weather gets better, when the days get longer, wait." (*Desperately.*) Wait! As if the stomach could wait. As if it could say to hunger: "Wait, don't gnaw for a couple of months;" and to the cold: "Don't swell our hands and don't squeeze our bodies, be patient, until we can buy a blanket." Wait! Wait till the days get longer! Wait! . . . Wait! . . . (*Desperately.*)

Rosa.—Why do you get excited? . . . What good does it do to get excited and curse people?

Juan José—What good does it do? . . . (*Menacingly.*) To find out that it is not just for an industrious man to be without work; to find out that those who refuse it to me do wrong; to know that when I complain I am right! Does that seem little to you? . . . Well, it's something! . . .

Rosa.—Something? (*Not understanding.*)

Juan José.—More than something; much . . .

Rosa.—I don't understand you.

Juan José.—I understand myself! (*With anguish.*) Well, then they are all trying to corner me! . . . (*With desperate energy.*) Well, an animal, when it sees itself cornered, bites! . . . I'll bite, too! If a beast has that right, a man has more right to it, for he's worth more.

Rosa (*Frightened*).—What are you thinking about? . . . Why do you wrinkle your forehead? . . . Why do you wring your hands? . . . What's the matter with you? . . . What do you mean?

Juan José.—That our suffering must end; that I don't want to lose you, and I won't lose you! (*Decisively.*)

Rosa (*Dubiously*).—Our suffering end? . . . How?

Juan José.—I'm not sure yet. It's here, here. (*Striking his forehead.*) I see it, as you see when it is getting dark,

very dimly. But tonight you'll have everything you need, I tell you you'll have it.

Rosa.—Are you going to see some one, to beg?

Juan José (With savage energy).—Beg! . . . Let the old, the useless, beg. A fellow like me, who has strong arms, and isn't lazy, and can earn his wages, ought to beg for only one thing, work. If he doesn't find it, if they don't give it to him . . . Then there is only one thing . . . one! There is no doubt . . . I don't know how I have hesitated so long! (*Resolutely and somberly.*)

Rosa.—What have you decided?

Juan Rosé.—That you shall not suffer hunger, misery, cold; that you shall not leave me; that you shall not go in search of what you need; because you are right, when you are out of everything, you must go in search of it, and rather than have the woman go, the man is going. I'll find it! (*Grimly.*)

Rosa.—Listen! . . .

Juan José.—I tell you I'll find it. (*He goes toward the back. Before reaching the door, he turns toward Rosa.*) Wait for me; I may be gone an hour, two hours, perhaps less, but I'll bring to my house everything that is needed, everything you ask; I'll bring it . . . I swear it by the most sacred, by . . . Those who have had a mother swear by her. I swear it by you! . . . Wait for me; good-bye. (*JUAN JOSÉ goes out resolutely at the back. ROSA stands gazing after him as if surprised and unable to fathom his words.*)

End of Act II

ACT III

The interval between the two parts will be brief, the main curtain being dropped.

First Part

Drop scene, representing a corner of a court yard of the "Cárcel Modelo"() in Madrid, intended for transient prison-*

*The city jail built in 1880.

ers and those condemned to serve sentence in other prisons. An open wing(*) on the right; another on the left. In the foreground, right, a wooden bench.

SCENE I

EL CANO (*Hoar-head*) and a JAILER

Jailer.—Well, tonight you pack your duds and go out with the chain-gang!

Cano.—It's time! This jail is awful slow! You're more cozy in the prisons; there's more freedom and better company.

Jailer.—True! As jailer, I know that.

Cano.—They're all first-timers here, a bunch of muts who're no good! Why, I tell you that, outside of yourself, I haven't seen a single mug that I knew!

Jailer.—Think of you not knowing them! There's not a guy that amounts to a hill of beans in the prisons that you don't know by heart!

Cano.—Well, since I was twenty-two, discounting the years when I gave 'em the slip, I've spent my time as a regular boarder in a jug! I'll soon be fifty-six. Imagine any one in the crooks' Brotherhood fooling me!

Jailer.—And how they all look up to you!

Cano.—Sure they do! (*Arrogantly. Disdainfully.*) That's nothing to get the swell-head over! None of them has any sand, nor any nerve! I say none and I lie. There's one! . . .

Jailer.—Juan José?

Cano.—The same! I certify to it and I know what I'm talking about!

Jailer.—Agreed. But he might as well not have any, because he doesn't kick, and he doesn't try to be the cock of the walk and bully the others.

Cano.—It's too early yet. The poor kid is down-hearted at his hard luck, and he thinks that, by keeping still and obeying absolutely, he will get out sooner and again be an honest man. That's what we all think the first time we're pinched! He'll get over it! . . . But once the kid had to show his nerve, and he did!

*The Spanish is *rompiente*. For *rompimiento*?

Jailer.—The devil he did! . . .

Cano.—It was the first day they brought him in from the pig pen, after the verdict and the sentence, where he got eight years. Do you remember?

Jailer.—Sure I remember! . . . Some rough guy!
. . . How he scrapped! . . .

Cano.—He was right. These blokes, as soon as they think a dog doesn't bite, they all pull his tail. When they saw him so silent, and so shy, and so meek, they said: "Here's our bacon!" It made me feel bad and I was going to stick up for him! . . . I didn't need to. The dog bit.

Jailer.—And he got his meat!

Cano.—*El Mellao* (Snag-tooth), that sneak, who still thinks he's going through the taverns scaring the boobs, started something with him, as soon as he saw him. At first, he tried to dodge the scrap, but, when he saw he had to slug 'em or be slugged, he rushed at *El Mellao*, he landed on him and sent him staggering against the wall with his face covered with blood.

Jailer.—What a punch it was! It knocked him flat!

Cano.—And then the other one, *El Churro* (Shaggy-sheep), who came at him yelling, making thrusts and feints with a spoon . . . Little good they did him. Juan José shot his paw, nailed him, like this, by the wrist, and *El Churro* went one way, and the spoon the other . . . He laid him up for several days! . . . Gosh, he's a dandy! Since then they look at him through a telescope!

Jailer.—Since then he hasn't waded into anybody. He goes along just as when he arrived, shy, silent; and nobody can get a word out of him. You're the only one he's peeped to at all.

Cano.—Because he's grateful and hasn't forgot what I wanted to do for him!

Jailer.—Did he tell you the cause of his trouble? (*EL CANO makes a motion with his hand, as if stealing.*) Just robbery, but before the robbery there was a gloomy story. He's in the dumps. You don't know? . . .

Cano.—Even if I knew, I wouldn't tell you. Let him tell you if he wants to. What I do tell you is, that I like him. And I'm going to do anything I can for him. (*As if echoing his thoughts.*) Tonight we go out in the chain gang, and we've got to be paired off together. Well, just as he likes!

Jailer (Inquisitively).—What? . . .

Cano (With an evil look).—Is it any of your business!
Let me alone!

Jailer (Submissively).—All right! (*Looking toward the right.*) Look, there he comes, without seeing anything, his eyes fixed on the cobble stones, his arms crossed. He's coming this way.

Cano.—Beat it, for I've got to talk to him, and I want to be alone. (*Imperiously.* *JUAN JOSÉ* comes in at the right, absorbed and sad, and goes toward *EL CANO* without seeing him. *The JAILER* goes out through the open wing on the right.)

SCENE 2

JUAN JOSÉ and EL CANO

*Cano (Stopping *JUAN JOSÉ* by taking his arm when the latter reaches him).*—What's the matter, Juan José?

Juan José.—What do you suppose is the matter! Troubles; always the same; the same I've had ever since misery and the love of a woman drove me mad.

Cano.—Pshaw, boy; what can't be helped, can't be helped; and that's the end of it! . . . Be game; for the world is wide, and there are plenty of doors in a prison.

Juan José.—It isn't the prison that makes me like this! Eight years are very long; they have many days, so many, and so sad, with no comfort except what a fellow gets from outside. It seems they will never end . . . and yet they will! During so many hours of suffering, there comes one when they will cry to you: "Now you're free, now you've paid for the wrong; go, go out, go back to your folks, to those who suffered with you, while you suffered for them. Go back where they are waiting for you, counting the minutes till you come." Waiting for that hour to strike, you can stand it all; because that hour, though it's only one, pays up for the rest, even if they are so many and so hard. When one sorrow ends with the prison and another begins; when you know that no one will come to see you behind the bars; that no one will be waiting for you when you get out, then liberty itself makes you afraid, and no matter how game men are, they can only tear their flesh with their nails, weep in-

side and curse, as they gnash their teeth! That's what is happening to me!

Cano.—Hasn't something like it happened to everyone? Do you think the world is a vineyard? Well, the one they don't hang by the head, they hang by the feet. Question of position. Don't you know what to do? The same as I. Go slow, scheme; everything comes to him that waits.

Juan José.—Wait! . . . (*Dejectedly.*) Wait, for what? . . .

Cano.—For what? To get yours; to get even for the dirty trick played on you by the woman who made you turn robber and doesn't remember you.

Juan José.—Not remember me! . . . (*With anxiety.*) Are you sure?

Cano.—Most likely! Don't pull the wool over your eyes!

Juan José.—Why shouldn't I, if my very life is in that woman!

Cano (Scornfully).—Bosh! . . .

Juan José.—The day of the trial, when I went into the room where my fate was to be decided, I had only one idea, this: "She'll come here to testify with the witnesses; I'll see her; hear her; have her near me a minute!" The rest didn't matter a bit; and the rest was my penalty, my honor, my sentence! . . . Now you see! . . . When I found out she wasn't coming because an illness, proved by a doctor's certificate, kept her away, I thought there had happened to me all that could happen in that room, and I listened to the sentence with a shrug of the shoulders; and I went back to jail, asking what I'm always asking myself: "I wonder what's the matter with her? Why doesn't she come to see me?" . . . What ought I to think?

Cano.—Think the worst and you won't miss it very far.

Juan José.—And then, Andrés, my friend, not answering the first letter I had them write him; not answering either the one you sent him a few days ago. Why doesn't he answer?

Cano.—Probably because he couldn't, or because he doesn't want to. Go and find out. What's sure is, that you are left to shift for yourself, and you ought to be thinking about something.

Juan José.—What? . . . My trouble? . . . The prison waiting for me? . . .

Cano.—The prison isn't as bad as it seems, looking at it like this, the first time you go in. The fellow who has spunk and fists and isn't a chump, can make himself the boss, and the boss is all right anywhere; in the prison as in his own house; in his own house as on a mountain; on a mountain as on a throne. The thing is to be the boss. The Devil lives in Hell, and is king . . . You, too, can live like a lord in prison, and make your way when you get out.

Juan José (Horrified).—I! . . . Make my way as you do! . . . As the others! . . .

Cano.—Why not?

Juan José.—No. I'll not do that! (*Forcefully.*) Forgive me, *Cano*; your life is not for me! It gives me the creeps! I only want to do my sentence, and have news of *Rosa*, and again be what I was before!

Cano (Ironically).—What you were before!

Juan José.—What I was always, always; until after I did what I did. An honest man.

Cano.—You think you can be! Don't talk nonsense, boy.

Juan José (Surprised).—Nonsense?

Cano.—You can never be but one thing after this, graduate of a prison.

Juan José (With anguish).—What!

Cano.—Get out of here; go and ask for work; go to honest people, and you'll have a fine time!

Juan José.—How, fine time? . . . (*Terrified.*)

Cano.—No one will give work to a man that's done time for a robbery; no one will open the doors of his house to a thief.

Juan José (With anguish, and as if overwhelmed by the words EL CANO has just spoken).—Oh! . . .

Cano.—The night you robbed a man, you bought a ticket in your world, the world of *honest* people, for an entirely different world—ours. On these journeys there are no return tickets.

Juan José.—No; don't say that; because it fills me with horror to listen to you! . . . I! . . .

Cano.—It's all in getting used to it! Your heart soon gets used to the strain, and it's all right!

Juan José.—But are you in earnest? Do you mean what you say? Are you sure it's all up with me?

Cano.—No; that is all up, and *this* is beginning!

- Juan José (*Firmly*).—No! . . . No! . . . I will not take up that life! (*Desperately.*) A life of crime, of remorse, with no hope but prison! No! . . . I repeat it! . . . No! . . .

Cano.—Crime! . . . Remorse! . . . Pfh! . . . As for the prison, I told you before; you can get out of prison!

Juan José.—If you serve your sentence.

Cano.—Or without serving it, if you know how to work it.

Juan José.—That's what you say . . .

Cano.—And I'll prove it!

Juan José.—Prove it? How?

Cano.—As such things are proved; by doing them. As I have confidence in you, I don't hide my plans from you; on the contrary, I'm ready to let you in on them. If you want to make your getaway with me tonight, you've only to open your mouth.

Juan José.—Tonight!

Cano.—When we leave the jail, on the road to the station. We go fastened together. It's a cinch.

Juan José.—Escape! . . . Have you gone crazy? But the shackles? And the chains?

Cano (*Scornfully*).—Them? You can file 'em.

Juan José.—File 'em! . . . When? With what?

Cano.—When? While we are chained in the yard. With what? With this. (*He takes from his pocket a coin of twenty reales.*)

Juan José.—Money?

Cano.—Don't be a ninny! . . . For the guards this is a coin; for me it's a box. Look at it carefully. (*He goes through the motions of unscrewing the coin and divides it into two parts; the lower part is hollow.*) The coin is hollow, and you open it like this, by unscrewing it.

Juan José (*Astonished*).—That's true!

Cano.—You can work for yourself in prison, too. See? (*Taking from the bottom of the box a tiny strip of steel.*) What do you think this is?

Juan José.—A piece of steel.

Cano.—And such a little one! It doesn't look like anything. But it is liberty, because it is a file.

Juan José.—This? (*Surprised.*)

Cano.—This! If you know how to use it, it cuts faster than the big ones. You can file the chain with this . . .

I'll tell you how later. Nobody notices it; not even those who rivet on the bracelet; you walk along; you watch your chance; you strike the iron; the chains drop off; and you sprint for it. You take a chance of having a guard put a bullet through you and keel you over, but you've got to die somehow. If they don't kill you, you're free. What do you say?

Juan José.—It's not death that scares me . . .

Cano.—Well then . . .

Juan José.—And if they take you alive? Extra sentence, more years of suffering, of being shut up . . . No, I won't do that, *Cano*. I'll keep still, but I won't follow you. I have confidence yet; I believe yet that when I get out of prison, I can again be honest; I hope yet to find *Rosa*, to convince myself that she is not guilty, to work for her . . . Anything. . . . Is this delirium? Then, leave me with my delirium, and escape.

Cano.—You sure are crazy! (*The JAILER* comes in at the right and turns to *JUAN JOSÉ*.)

SCENE 3

JUAN JOSÉ, EL CANO and the JAILER

Jailer.—*Juan José?* . . .

Cano (With ill humor).—What are you butting in for?

Jailer.—Because the guard sent me with a message for him.

Juan José.—For me?

Jailer.—He said to me: "Find *Juan José* and give him this letter."

Juan José.—A letter! . . . Where is it? (*Impatiently*.)

Jailer.—Here it is. (*Showing a letter to JUAN JOSÉ*.)

Juan José (Snatching the letter).—Give it to me! . . . Hand it here quick! . . . (*The JAILER* goes out at the left. *JUAN JOSÉ* eagerly takes the letter from the unsealed envelope; unfolds it and stands with it in his hands, turning it over and over, looking at it.)

Cano.—Well, what are you waiting for?

Juan José (Sadly).—Don't you know I can't read? You

read it to me. (EL CANO takes the letter which JUAN JOSÉ hands him.)

SCENE 4

JUAN JOSÉ and EL CANO; finally the JAILER

Cano (*Reading*).—"Madrid, the 15th"

Juan José.—No; not that; the signature First, the signature. (*Impatiently. Hopefully.*) I hope it is from her! Go on, quick, read the signature! (*Impatiently and eagerly.*)

Cano.—The signature! (*Turning a page of the letter.*) The signature says, "Andrés."

Juan José (*Dejectedly*).—Andrés! (*With deep sadness.*) It's not from her!

Cano (*Reading*).—"Dear Juan José: I shall rejoice if on receipt of this"

Juan José (*Interrupting*).—Skip it, skip it; a little further down, where that stuff ends.

Cano.—I am coming to that (*As if glancing through the lines.*) "Mine Thank God" Here. "I must tell you why I haven't written before; because I've been out of town working; then I didn't want to answer you, because what you asked for was news of Rosa and" (*Stopping.*)

Juan José (*Very impatiently*).—What are you stopping for? Don't stop. Go on.

Cano.—"And it wasn't good, so that's why I didn't write."

Juan José (*With anguish*).—Go on!

Cano (*Reading*).—"Well, now you know why I didn't write you, for that; because I wanted to save you from pain, for you've got enough with being in jail because of her; I wish they'd cut the head off the first woman that was born." (*He stops reading.*) This guy is a live one.

Juan José.—Don't stop. Don't you see I'm dying to know it all?

Cano (*Continuing to read*).—"After all, as they are bound to tell you some time and you ask with such uneasiness, here goes; Rosa is well; that sickness was a fake. She didn't go to the trial because she didn't want to see you, and as now she has a pull and money, she framed it up."

Juan José.—She didn't want to see me! . . . Me!
(Desperately. Controlling himself. To EL CANO.) What more?

Cano (Reading).—“She is living high now; she hasn't left the house, but she is living on the main floor and she is living with Paco . . .”

Juan José (With horror, hatred, and sorrow).—With Paco! . . . Are you sure? Did you read it right? . . .
(Desperately.) Where does it say that? . . . Let's see! Show it to me! Let me see it! Where does it say that? Where, Cano, where?

Cano (Pointing with his finger at a paragraph in the letter).—In this line. Look at it . . .

Juan José (Leaning over to look at the letter and the place to which EL CANO points).—Look at it! . . .
(With anguish.) How am I going to look at it, if I don't understand these marks! . . .
(To EL CANO.) But she went with him? . . . Does it say so there? . . . Yes, it says so! Why should you deceive me! . . . She's with him! . . . With him! . . .
(Controlling himself; with sinister calm.) Go on, Cano, go on; read it all. After what you've read me, what bad can come? . . . Read from where he says: “She's living with Paco.”

Cano (Reading).—“She is living with Paco, and she is living, as I said before, in our house on the main floor, like a queen. Of course, Toñuela and I don't speak to her. Here you have her with the boss, while you are rotting in prison. Now you know everything.”

Juan José.—Everything, yes, everything! . . . What more do I need to know! . . .
(He sinks down on the bench in deep dejection.)

Cano (Reading, without JUAN JOSÉ's hearing him.) “Keep well, and greetings from Toñuela; order in any way you like, your friend, Andrés Pérez.”

Juan José (Rising).—Give me that letter; give it to me, so I can touch it. It seems impossible that a piece of paper could do so much damage.
(The JAILER comes in at the right.)

Jailer.—Cano!

Cano.—What?

Jailer.—They want you in the office.

Cano.—I am off like a rocket.
(To JUAN JOSÉ.) Don't

forget what we've been talking about. (EL CANO goes out right.)

SCENE 5

JUAN JOSÉ, alone

Juan José (*Desperately*).—With Paco! . . . There is no doubt. There can't be any. I have the proof; and it's in writing! . . . I have it here, here. (*Looking at the letter which he has kept in his hand. He unfolds the letter.*) Here is where it says: "Rosa is living with Paco!" . . . (*He glances over the letter.*) It says so, yes. But where does it say so? . . . On what page? In what place? (*Turning the letter in all directions.*) I wonder if this is it! . . . Maybe it's further up? . . . (*With bitter desperation.*) I don't know! (*With sorrowful sarcasm.*) It seems these cursed turkey-tracks are playing hide and seek with my sorrow, and are saying to me: "Here is that about Paco living with Rosa; but I'll bet you don't know where it is . . . I'll bet you can't find it." (*With anguish and wrath.*) And I don't find it! . . . (*With great bitterness.*) My God, what misfortune as great as that of those who are born as I! . . . They don't even learn to read! They are not taught, and, when a moment like this arrives, when a few ink marks bring the world down on your head, you are robbed of the last comfort, the only one that's left, to find those lines and feast your eyes on them and crumple them in your fingers and mangle them with your teeth! . . . How I'd like to twist and bite those five words: "Rosa is living with Paco." Just those! Only those! . . . And I can't! I can't! I can only squeeze up the whole letter, as if it were all alike, the affection of Andrés and the disgrace of Rosa; the signature of a friend and the unfaithfulness of a woman! . . . That's not it; that's not what I want! It's one line I want, the one I want to crumple and bite, and tear into as many pieces, as it has torn my heart! And I don't know which one it is; I don't know where it is! . . . (*After a pause.*) She with Paco! . . . Rosa, my Rosa belong to another! To the man I hate most in this world! . . . (*With great affliction and breaking into sobs.* Angrily.) And I weep! . . . Men don't weep; they

pay back. (*With spiteful energy. Sarcastically.*) They are saying: "He's in for a long time, for eight years; afterwards we'll see. Let's have a good time, while he suffers." How they will all laugh at me! . . . (*With an expression of hatred and in an avengeful tone.*) They won't laugh long; I swear it by all the hatred that I have for them! . . . El Cano has told me we can escape tonight. Good! Tonight, either I'll drop dead on the road, from a shot, or I'll be free, and if I'm free, we'll all laugh . . . (*In a somber voice.*) All! . . . They and I! . . . (EL CANO comes in at the right.)

SCENE 6

JUAN JOSÉ and EL CANO

Cano.—Now I'm back.

Juan José.—I'm glad, because I was in a hurry to talk to you. Are you sure we can escape tonight?

Cano.—I'll stake my head on it.

Juan José.—And after we escape, will we be able to go up into the city without a soul seeing us?

Cano.—Yes, if you want to. I've got a place to go, and where they'll give us clothes to disguise ourselves and tools to defend ourselves with. I've got money.

Juan José.—Count on me; we'll get away together.

Cano (Joyfully).—At last you've decided?

Juan José (Somberly and resolutely).—Yes! I've decided!

Cano.—Well, so long, and mum's the word. (*Holding out his hand.*)

Juan José (Pressing EL CANO's hand warmly).—So long!

Second Part

The stage represents a room of the house, where ROSA and PACO live. At the back, a large double door which is wide open, allowing to be seen a wide hall which makes a turn and is sup-

posed to open on the street. This hall is lighted. A door on the right; another on the left; at the left a closed window.

In the foreground, on the right and placed in a suitable position to reflect the door of the back, is a clothes press with a mirror in the door. On the left, between the door and the window, a dressing table of veneered wood, with a marble top, mirror, and completely appointed; at one side of the mirror, there protrudes an iron bracket, supporting a lighted wall lamp.

At the back, on the right, a dresser on which there is an unlighted lamp and several trinkets in poor taste; on the left, a practicable clothes press with two doors, filled with women's wearing apparel. Hanging from the wall, three or four chromos in gilt frames. Fine Vitoria chairs.

In the foreground, on the left, a small rocker.

When the scene opens, ISIDRA is seen lounging in the rocker and ROSA is before the dressing table, in a dressing sack with her sleeves rolled and her arms bare. She is wearing a dark skirt and has a towel in her hands.

SCENE I

ROSA and ISIDRA

Rosa (*As if she had just wiped her hands and hanging the towel on a rack attached to the dressing table. To ISIDRA*).—Don't bring me this soap any more. It makes my hands very rough.

Isidra.—Well, child, they gave it to me for good. You see, two pesetas.

Rosa.—It's the limit. Tomorrow bring me a box of the other; that white that smells so nice . . . And my rings? . . . Here they are! (*Taking out three or four rings from a jewel box which is on the dressing table.*) I am going to tell Paco to get me an adjustor, because this one is too big for me. (*One of the rings which she has been putting on as she talks.*)

Isidra (*Seizing Rosa's hand which she has put out toward her to show her the rings*).—And how pretty it is! . . . You never get tired of looking at it! Goodness, how it sparkles!

Rosa.—It cost a hundred dollars.

Isidra.—Tell that to me who went and bought it for you with Paco! I tell you he's in love. There's no expense that's too great for him, if it's for you.

Rosa.—Paco is a prince to me. It's enough for me to say to him, I want this, for him to get it; and as for affection, you can see that; he loves me more every day.

Isidra.—And you him.

Rosa.—Yes, señora; and he deserves it; I love him; he's the only man that I have really loved.

Isidra.—Now you'll understand that I was very sensible when I told you to leave Juan José.

Rosa (Remorsefully).—He loved me, too!

Isidra.—Yes; but love under bare poles makes no headway. (*As if trying not to attach importance to the memory of JUAN JOSÉ.*) That's a closed book; we mustn't speak of it.

Rosa.—True! (*After a pause, taking a comb from the dressing table and turning to the clothes press, which has a mirror, the candles of which she lights.*) I'm going to fix up my hair a little. (*Beginning to let down her hair.*) Paco told me we'd go out tonight. (*Combing her hair.*)

Isidra.—And the new servant?

Rosa.—She'll come tomorrow. I need her, for I've had such a time . . . If it hadn't been for you helping me

Isidra.—Why shouldn't I help you; of course; for thanks to you and Paco I'm on easy street! . . . This is living! (*PACO comes in from the door on the left, where he stops and looks at ROSA affectionately.*)

SCENE 2

ROSA, ISIDRA, and PACO

Paco (From the door on the left. To ROSA, playfully and affectionately).—There's nothing like having a fine head of hair to make a woman vain.

Rosa (Coquettishly).—Well, it's all mine!

Paco (Gracefully taking ROSA's hair in his hands).—And mine! . . .

Rosa (Affectionately).—You don't have to say that . . . Let go, for I can't comb it! . . . (*Looking at PACO and*

approaching him with the comb stuck in her hair.) You could straighten your tie. You've got it with one end looking up at the clouds and the other down at the sewer. Come here, so I can fix it for you, slouch! . . . (Straightening Paco's cravat.) Like this.

Paco (Looking at ROSA passionately. To ISIDRA).—Do you see her, Señá Isidra? She's good enough to eat! (To ROSA.) Will you be long in getting dressed?

Rosa.—No.

Paco.—Well, while you're finishing, I'm going to the tavern to check up accounts with the foremen. Tomorrow is Saturday, and I must pay the men.

Rosa.—Don't be long!

Paco.—Imagine! . . . As soon as I get through, I'll come up and we'll take a little drive to see the Carnival procession. Julian and Faustino told me they would go, too, with Indalecia and Antonia. We'll meet them there and then we'll all go and have a bite . . . (To ISIDRA.) Come with us.

Isidra.—No, lad; I'm no good for a Carnival. What I'm good for is going to bed, which I'll do pretty soon.

Paco.—Till tomorrow, and may you rest well. (PACO takes a light, broad brimmed hat which is on the table, and goes out at the back.)

SCENE 3

ROSA and ISIDRA

Rosa (Turning toward ISIDRA).—I've finished combing.

Isidra.—How pretty you are! . . . Like this . . . you're twice as good looking as you were eight months ago.

Rosa.—Because work and want wear fast . . . Even yet I don't know how I! . . .

Isidra.—What foolish things we women do! . . . Thank goodness, you opened your eyes in time.

Rosa (Who has been standing as she talks at the dressing table, passing a powder puff over her face).—To be sure! . . . Yes, of course! (Looking at herself in the mirror of the dressing table.)

Isidra.—What dress are you going to wear?

Rosa.—This same skirt and the red waist. It's there, in that room. (*The one on the right.*) I'll go and get it. (*She goes into the room on the right.*)

Isidra.—Do you want me to help you?

Rosa (Inside).—I don't need you. Bring me the shawl from the wardrobe.

Isidra.—Which one?

Rosa (Inside).—The black embroidered Manila one.

Isidra (She opens the clothes press which is at the left back).—You've got a regular toggery in here! (*Peering into the clothes press.*) Where is the shawl?

Rosa (Inside).—On the right, next to the blue dress.

Isidra.—Now I've found it. My, it's rich! (*Looking at the shawl.*) I'll leave it here for you, on this chair. (*She leaves the shawl on a chair.* ROSA comes out of the room on the right, buttoning her waist.)

Rosa.—Darned sleeves! . . . It takes a year to get into them.

Isidra.—Do you want anything more?

Rosa.—Nothing; till tomorrow. Leave the street door unlocked so Paco can come up. (*ISIDRA goes out at the farther door in the back, and leaves the door unlocked.*)

SCENE 4

ROSA, finally JUAN JOSÉ

Rosa (Finishing the buttoning before the mirror).—That's it. Now a silk handkerchief around my neck. (*She goes to the dressing table, opens a drawer, and searches through it; after a moment, she takes out a handkerchief.*) This one. (*Folding the handkerchief and knotting it at her throat.*) What'll I fasten it with? . . . With the gold pin. (*She takes a gold pin from the jewel box and goes to the clothes press, which has a mirror, where she finishes arranging the handkerchief.*) This is more than enough to make Indalecia and Antonia green with envy . . . The truth is, there aren't two like Paco! (*Joyfully.*) This is the life! . . . JUAN JOSÉ comes in through the door at the back.)

Juan José (From the back).—At last!

Rosa.—Some one coming! . . . (*Without turning her head.*) Is it you?

Juan José (*Advancing with sinister calm.*).—Yes, I! Not the one you expected; but it's I. (*Rosa raises her eyes and sees the form of JUAN JOSÉ reflected in the mirror of the clothes press.*)

Rosa (*Horrified*).—Juan José! . . . (*Rosa, with her head lowered, motionless, in an attitude of great terror, and without daring to turn her head toward the place where JUAN JOSÉ is standing. He, also, remains motionless, first contemplating ROSA, and then, turning his eyes on all the furnishings and objects in the room.*)

SCENE 5

Rosa and Juan José

Juan José (*After making the pause indicated by the preceding note, advances a few steps toward ROSA, and stops without taking his eyes from her.*).—In what luxury you are living! . . . And how well dressed you are! . . . By Jingo you didn't sell yourself cheap! . . . (*With sarcasm and sorrow.*)

Rosa.—My God! . . . (*Without daring to change her position.*)

Juan José (*Sarcastically*).—Don't you dare look at me? . . . Are you afraid? . . . Do you object to talking with me? . . . Object! . . . Why didn't you object before I committed a robbery for you? Then I was on the level and you were not! . . . Now we are alike!

Rosa (*In the same attitude and with a tone of entreaty*).—Juan José! . . .

Juan José.—Then you are afraid? . . . Of course! The surprise! (*With concentrated ire.*) How could you imagine that I, sentenced to eight years in prison, was going to come, like this, suddenly, and enter your house and fling into your teeth the wrong you've done me? . . . How were you going to imagine? . . . (*With menacing calm.*) Well, I've come; you see that! . . .

Rosa.—You've come!

Juan José.—Yes! (*Seizing Rosa by the arm and forcing her to turn toward him.*) Well, face me! (*Angrily.*) Do you know why I've come?

Rosa (Terrified).—Oh! . . . Pity!

Juan José.—Pity! . . . On whom will I have pity? . . . Did any one have pity on me?

Rosa.—You have pity on me! (*As if bewildered, and without knowing what she says.*) Go, for God's sake, go!

Juan José.—Go! (*He bursts into a sinister laugh.*) Look; I didn't think I'd laugh, and you've made me laugh . . . Go! . . . You're crazy!

Rosa (Horrified).—Why have you come? . . . Why have you come? Speak!

Juan José.—To collect in an hour for eight months of anguish. Eight months that I spent in prison, abandoned, alone, imagining! . . . Imagining the truth! That you had left me for another! . . . What horrible nights I passed! . . . When my head fell on the hair pillow I saw yours falling on his shoulder; and I saw your eyes fixed on his, while mine gazed into the darkness; and I saw you close together, very close, while I gnawed the blanket to stifle my sobs! . . . This is what I did, curse, weep, doubt you, and then, not even doubt, convince myself of your deceit, and escape from the prison, and look for you, and look for him! . . . And still you ask why I've come to this house! . . . I've come to kill Paco.

Rosa (Terrified).—To kill him?

Juan José.—Yes!

Rosa.—You kill him! . . . You kill my Pa . . . (*Restraining herself, as if understanding the effect of her words on JUAN JOSÉ.*)

Juan José (With hatred and astonishment).—Your Paco! . . . Did you say your Paco? . . . And she says it before me! (*With ire and great bitterness.*) But have you forgotten that before he was your Paco I was your Juan José?

Rosa (Terrified).—Go away! Go away, for God's sake! If he should come . . .

Juan José.—That's what I'm waiting for. For him to come. Don't you see I haven't spoken of you yet? . . . That I don't even tell you what I want from you! . . . Well, for this reason; because I'm waiting for him; for Paco; for your Paco! . . .

Rosa (*With anguish*).—No; you won't do what you say!
I'll prevent it!

Juan José (*Scornfully*).—How?

Rosa.—Warning! . . . Screaming!

Juan José (*Ferociously*).—Warn him? . . . You haven't time. Scream! . . . Just as sure as I ever loved you with all my heart. if you scream, I'll kill you, too.

Rosa (*Overwhelmed*).—No, Juan José! I beg you! . . . Do you want me to beg it of you in God's name? . . . Don't wait for him! . . . Forgive me! . . . Go away!

Juan José.—Forgive you when you plead for him! Go away! . . . Of course, you're so used to commanding me, to never having me say "no," that even now, at this very moment, you think I'll listen to you, that I'll go away! . . . You are mistaken; I'm not going away. I'm going to wait.

Rosa.—Have pity!

Juan José.—Pity! You can soften other men's hearts by begging them in the name of their parents, of their brothers and sisters, of their children, in the name of a tenderness that comes from them! . . . Me, no! I have no parents, nor brothers and sisters, nor family! . . . Nothing! . . . I did have you and I've lost you! There is no one can touch this, (*The heart*) no one! So, don't plead, for your pleadings strike a stone!

Rosa.—Listen! . . .

Juan José (*Firmly*).—Didn't you hear me say "no." (*Listening for something outside.*) Some one is coming! . . .

Rosa (*Also listening*).—Yes! (*With anguish.*) It's he! . . . It's his step! (*Terrified.*)

Juan José.—His step! . . . (*With bitterness and rage*) You know his step! . . . You never knew mine! . . . (*Desperately.*) I swear you'll never hear his again! (*He goes to the back.*)

Rosa.—No! (*Trying to stop JUAN JOSÉ.*)

Juan José.—No! Why the hope of killing him is the only thing that keeps me alive! . . . Let go, woman, let go! . . . (*Repulses ROSA violently; she falls on the floor and JUAN JOSÉ goes out hastily at the back, locking the door behind him.*)

SCENE 6

Rosa, later JUAN JOSÉ

Rosa.—No! . . . (Rising.) Impossible! . . .
 No! (She goes toward the door at the back, and tries to open it.)
 Locked! . . . And Paco! . . . (As if listening.)
 What! . . . What cry is that! . . . (In despair.)
 Paco! . . . Open, for God's sake, open! . . . (The
 door at the back opens, and through it comes JUAN JOSÉ, with
 his clothing disarranged. Rosa draws back with horror; then
 she advances toward JUAN JOSÉ.)

SCENE 7

ROSA and JUAN JOSÉ; PACO, dead

Rosa (To JUAN JOSÉ with terror).—You! And Paco?
 . . . What have you done with Paco?
 Juan José (Pointing toward the back with savage joy).—
 He's out there!

Rosa.—On the floor! (Looking toward the back.) Dead!
 Juan José.—It had to be! One of the two! It fell to
 him.

Rosa (With despair).—Did you kill him? . . . You've
 killed Paco, murderer!

Juan José (Proudly).—Murderer, no! I killed him, giv-
 ing him time to defend himself; face to face; in a fair fight
 as men kill.

Rosa (Horrified).—Oh!

Juan José.—I've killed him because no man, no man can
 have you while I'm alive, without me killing him like this
 one. (Seizing ROSA by the arm.)

Rosa (With a burst of energy).—And what good has it done
 you to kill him, if it was he, my Paco, that I loved? . . .

Juan José (Stupified).—Him? . . . He releases
 ROSA's arm.)

Rosa.—Him! . . . And I'll avenge him! . . .
 (Taking advantage of JUAN JOSE's stupor, she goes to the
 window and opens it.) Help! . . .

Juan José (*Raising his head*).—What are you doing? . . .
Are you calling? . . . (*He goes towards ROSA.*)

Rosa.—Help!

Juan José (*Dragging ROSA from the window, stopping her mouth with one hand and holding her with the other*).—Shut up!
How long are you going to gloat over my ruin? Shut up!

Rosa.—Help . . . ! (*Trying to call out and get free.*)

Juan José.—Shut up! Don't try to get away! Shut up!
(*Tightening his grip on ROSA's mouth and catching her by the throat.*) Won't you shut up! . . . (*After a short struggle, seeing that ROSA remains still and motionless.*) It was time you shut up and kept still! (*He lets go of ROSA, who falls dead on the floor.*) Shut up! Yes! . . . (*Bending over ROSA.*) But, why this silence of yours! . . . (*Touching ROSA with anguish.*) What's this? (*With horror.*) This is death! (*With despair.*) And was it I? . . . I!
. . . (*ANDRÉS comes in at the back.*)

SCENE 8

THE SAME, ANDRÉS, *who comes in at the back*

Andrés.—A man murdered! . . . And ROSA! . . .
Who! . . . (*Seeing JUAN JOSÉ.*) You?

Juan José.—Yes!

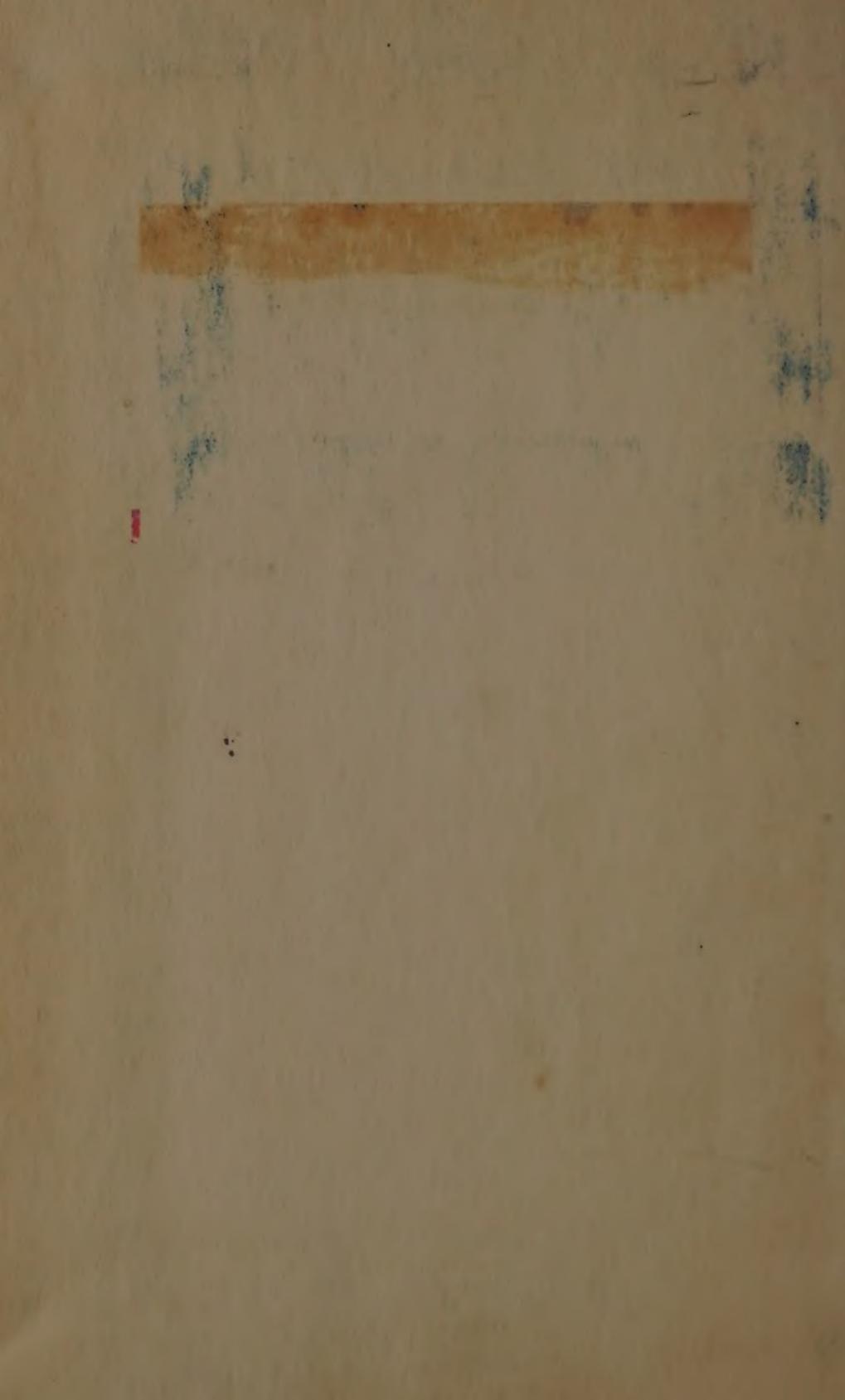
Andrés.—You?

Juan José.—I! Don't I tell you it was I!

Andrés.—Why do you wait? . . . Escape! . . .
Flee!

Juan José.—Flee! . . . And why should I flee? . . .
What do I gain by flight? . . . Life? My life was this,
(*Meaning ROSA.*) And I have killed it!

End of the Play



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